



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**SWIMMING WITH THE NATIVES: CULTURAL  
IMMERSION AND ITS APPLICATIONS FOR NAVAL  
SPECIAL WARFARE**

by

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September 2004

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CULTURAL IMMERSION AND ITS APPLICATIONS FOR NAVAL SPECIAL  
WARFARE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The New Enemy hides in the shadows of anonymity. As of September 11, 2001, combat in today's world is much more challenging and requires a better understanding of the enemy and his support infrastructure. There is a renewed interest in human intelligence (HUMINT) as expressed by the US Department of Defense and Intelligence Agencies. But HUMINT is only data collected by human sources about an individual or group of individuals and their activities. Cultural Immersion is a step above mere data collection...it allows its practitioners to understand the thought processes and/or the routines of questionable individuals or groups.

Cultural immersion is a skill set that allows missions to develop and execute with smooth transitions. It does not guarantee mission success but certainly assures greater mission success than can be achieved operating without it. Cultural immersion "equalizes the playing field" when US/Coalition forces are operating in foreign lands against otherwise invisible or immersed enemies.

This thesis examines various aspects of cultural immersion, how they relate to warfare, and proposes recommendations for cultural immersion supporting present day Naval Special Warfare (NSW) missions. The intent is to provide decision makers a viable option for actionable intelligence during the Global War on Terrorism.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	After Action Report
ACS	Advanced Civil Schooling
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BDA	Bomb Damage Assessment
BUDS	Basic Underwater Demolition School
CA	Civil Affairs (Mission Type)
CAS	Close Air Support
CBI	China-India-Burma
CBT	Combating Terrorism
CD	Counter Drug (Mission Type)
CENTCOM	Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CMH	Congressional Medal of Honor
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CNSWC	Commander Naval Special Warfare Command (aka.WARCOM)
COC	Chain Of Command
COG	Center Of Gravity
COI	Coordinator of Information
CONUS	Continental United States
CP	Counter Proliferation (Mission Type)
CQB	Close Quarters Battle
CSAR	Combat Search And Rescue (Mission Type)
CSG	Carrier Strike Group (formerly CVBG—Carrier Battle Group)
CT	Combating Terrorism (Mission Type)
CWO	Chief Warrant Officer
DA	Direct Action (Mission Type)
DEPORD	Deployment Order
DIOCC	District Intelligence Operations Coordination Center
DLI	Defense Language Institute

EOD	Explosive Ordinance Disposal
ESG	Expeditionary Strike Group (formerly ARG—Amphibious Ready Groups)
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
FAOC	Foreign Area Officer Course
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FMP	Full Mission Profile
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
G2	Military Intelligence
GSO	General Services Office
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
HQ	Head Quarters
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
ICEX	Intelligence Collection and Exploitation Program
ICT	In Country Training
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IO	Information Operations
IW	Information Warfare
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JIACG	Joint Interagency Coordination Groups
JOC	Joint Operations Center
JOC	Joint Operating Concept
JOF	Joint Operating Force
JSOTF	Joint Special Operations Task Force
KIA	Killed In Action
LDNN	Lien Doc Nquoi Nhia
LDO	Limited Duty Officer
LIO	Leadership Interdiction Operations
LNO	Liaison Officer
MARNAV	Maritime Navigation

MAROPS	Maritime Operations
MID	Military Intelligence Division
MIO	Maritime Interdiction Operations
MO	Morale Operations
MOE	Measures Of Effectiveness
MU	Maritime Unit
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAB	Naval Amphibious Base
NCDU	Navy Combat Demolition Units
NILO	Navy Intelligence Liaison Officer
NLF	National Liberation Front (Vietnam)
NMS	National Military Strategy (of the United States)
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
NROTC	Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps
NSCT	National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (of the United States)
NSS	National Security Strategy (of the United States)
NSW	Naval Special Warfare
NSWC	Naval Special Warfare Center
NSWG	Naval Special Warfare Group
NSWRON	Naval Special Warfare Squadron
NSWTG	Naval Special Warfare Task Group
NSWTU	Naval Special Warfare Task Unit
NSWU	Naval Special Warfare Unit
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OG	Operational Groups
OIC	Officer In Command
ONI	Officer of Naval Intelligence
OPCON	Operational Control (of forces)
OSG	Operational Swimmer Groups
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OTB	Over The Beach
PIOCC	Province Intelligence Operations Coordination Center

POSTOP	Post-Operations (report)
POW	Prisoner Of War
PR	Personnel Recovery
PRU	Provisional Reconnaissance Units
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
PT	Physical Training
R&A	Research and Analysis
R&D	Research and Development
RECI	Regional Expertise Cultural Immersion
RSO	Regional Security Office
RSSZ	Rung Sat Special Zone
SA	Situational Awareness
SAO	Security Assistance Officer
SAS	Special Air Service
SBT	Special Boat Team
SDVT	Swimmer Delivery Vehicle Team
SEAL	Sea Air Land Team
SF	Special Forces
SI	Secret Intelligence
SITREP	Situation Report
SO	Special Operations
SOC	Special Operations Command (or Commanders)
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SQT	SEAL Qualification Training
SR	Special Reconnaissance (Mission Type)
SWCC	Special Warfare Combatant Crewman
TACON	Temporarily Assigned Control (of forces)
TGO	Terminal Guidance Operations
UDT	Underwater Demolition Team
USA	US Army
USAF	US Air Force
USAFSOS	US Air Force Special Operations School

USMC	US Marine Corps
USN	US Navy
USNA	US Naval Academy
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command (aka. SOCOM)
UW	Unconventional Warfare (Mission Type)
VBSS	Visit Board Search and Seizure
VC	Viet Cong
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
X2	Counterespionage

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To all those officers and enlisted in Naval Special Warfare, who have kept their faith in me and my abilities, I will keep the promise I made to the community eight years ago... “to continuously try to make a difference for NSW.”

**HOOYAH!**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

*What is called 'foreknowledge' cannot be elicited from spirits, nor from gods, nor from analogy with past events, nor from calculations. It must be obtained from men who know the enemy situation.*

(Sun Tzu, 1971, p. 145, emphasis added)

### **A. A HYPOTHETICAL TERRORIST SCENARIO**

Located in a small isolated harbor, along the western coastline of a country is what appears to be a commercial fishing trawler. Onboard this trawler, a very determined nine-man terrorist-planning cell is conducting a meeting to select high priority targets over the coming months. Targets include key international landmarks, population centers, communications, transportation, and economic centers. Through experience, this particular terrorist organization considers direct action against military targets too high risk.

The members of this particular cell have links to other well known terrorist organizations currently engaged in what they refer to as the “Struggle against the ‘Great Demon’ or ‘Great Satan’”—which in turn refers to the western forces and their coalitions. The cell members continue their discussion by talking about manning issues and shipments of necessary weapons, explosive materials, falsified country documents, communications, medical supplies, and other logistics-type materials to carry out their operations. The discussion continues well into the night and concludes with how the equipment and supplies are to be shipped via some outside source of transportation with the location of the drop-off at a pre-determined warehouse location. This terror cell relies on financial support from outside sources or developed points of contact in local regions to continue “their struggle.” The cell also requires logistics support (including arms and explosives) from sympathetic countries.

Ashore, some of the local populations in the nearby coastal fishing village know that these “new fishermen” who have been trawling and bottom fishing for the last couple of months seem to have some of the requisite gear and nets to catch the various native species of fish, and yet they are never rigged to do so—even during the height of the

fishing season. The locals have noticed other peculiarities, such as when the “new people” do come into town they speak the local tongue but with poor accents; for fishermen the “new guys” are extremely clean and their hands are never scarred from pulling in lines and/or nets; and they are inappropriately dressed for the weather this time of year. They rarely eat in the local restaurants and what provisions they obtain from the local market seem like unusual combinations for this region. They also seem to be preoccupied all the time and rarely interact with the villagers. They are private, almost guarded when approached.

After only two more months they depart to parts unknown...

Several months later a series of at sea transportation disasters occur, leaving large numbers of passengers dead or severely injured. A year after the disasters it is determined—through exhaustive investigation—that these were not the consequence of coincidence or malfunctioning systems errors. Instead, they were deliberate acts of sabotage, the intent or objective of which has yet to be determined. There was no forewarning or intelligence ever to indicate that these attacks were even being planned. The only real oddity found was that the improvised explosive devices (IED) used in the attacks were secured to structures by commercial grade high-tensile fishing line and several fishing lures were soldered within the housing as part of each device’s detonator mechanism...

## **B. WHAT IF THE SCENARIO COULD BE CHANGED?**

What if the same scenario is played out, but prior to any disasters and great loss of life the terror cell had been interdicted? What if some of the villagers happened to be friends with a known military man who travels to their seaport village and on occasion even goes fishing with them? He speaks the local language fluently. He is a talented fisherman, for being a non-local, and quite genuinely fond of his local fishing comrades. He often has dinner with several of his closest friends in the village to include the mayor. He has even helped out in the rescue of some local children when their boat was capsized in the bay.

In the eyes of the locals he is a good man and they **trust** him.

Upon the arrival of the “new fishermen,” given their strange behavior, the locals tell their military friend, over dinner one night, about all the strange goings on. The military man indicates “that is an interesting set of facts” and goes out fishing the next day with his friends and observes the suspicious trawler. He leaves the next day and returns a day later with several of his military co-workers. He asks the locals about the new fishermen’s routines and behaviors. He sends two of his people to the best viewpoint of the harbor. He asks if he can rent a local fishing vessel and is accommodated. The man and his co-workers have communications equipment and lots of cameras. The man, his partner on the boat, and his companions on the point watch the new fishermen for over a week.

The military man then goes to his closest local confidante and asks for a larger vessel, and again he is accommodated. A day later another group of military men show up in several vehicles and motor out to the larger vessel now being used by the military man. About four days pass, and the fourth night an explosion is heard followed by several gunshots from the suspect trawler. After an hour or so the military man and his people motor their vessel and the terrorists’ vessel into port. Several vehicles with local government military inside appear, and the nine terrorists are placed into them and driven away.

What if the terrorist cell was a senior cell running operations for nine other cells? And as a result of the intelligence gathered the other nine cells were captured and a domino effect is initiated?

For instance, a day later naval vessels intercept a large container ship. A team of commandos takes command of the ship and stops it. Once they secure the ship an inspection team is brought on board and the ship’s manifest is evaluated. There are inconsistencies in the documents and the ship is subsequently searched from bow to stern. The search yields 1000 small arms (including shoulder fired missiles and rocket propelled grenades), thousands of rounds of ammunition, several hundred kilograms of explosives, communication equipment, several computers with numerous terrorist data bases loaded, and medical supplies. A week later, over \$100 million in assets are frozen as a result of

the database information captured in the ship's computers. Other effective operations are carried out. More personnel, intelligence, and weapons and supplies are captured.

The effects of the initial fishing vessel takedown can't even be measured since one breakthrough leads to another, and the intelligence that is accumulated continues to have pay-offs months and even years later.

### **C. REAL CAPABILITIES AND SKILLS TO CONDUCT THIS OPERATION**

There are several key lessons to take away from this set of scenarios: The first is that the military man was observant and plugged into through a social network in the fishing village and knew enough about the locals' habits to make sense of what they told him. The second is that he spoke the local language, which allowed him to move about freely in the village. The third is he had already established a relationship of trust by previously getting to know the locals and helping out with the rescue of their children. He was assigned to a military unit that he could call upon in short notice that could also bring to bear the needed equipment to conduct his reconnaissance of the "suspect personalities." Once satisfied with the veracity of the locals' intelligence, his teams' own observations, and perhaps some form of reach-back capability to other intelligence resources, he was able to bring additional forces in to conduct the direct action on the suspect vessel. The result of the raid on the fishing vessel not only stopped the transportation attacks from occurring, but yielded collateral outcomes such as actionable-intelligence so that other cells could be interdicted, military supplies intercepted, financial assets frozen, and the terrorists disrupted.

There are those in power in the US who, in theory, would like to see something like this happen...But, in practice we are hardly there yet.

### **D. THE 9/11 REPORT: UNITY OF EFFORT**

The Cold War is over. The US is now focused on asymmetric threats posed by terrorists, insurgents, and possibly rogue states, not with tank division exercises, large troop movements, fleets setting out to sea. Of these current threats the first two are of greatest concern, since rogue states tend to increasingly stand out alone with their activities much more readily identifiable. Terrorists and insurgents, in contrast, can work

in anonymity and in the darkened corners of large cities. They can also take advantage of shelters afforded by poor or weakened states. With the right type of leadership they can exist in open societies for years unnoticed.

Following the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania in November 2002, the US Congress and President George W. Bush established by law the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, also known as the 9/11 Commission. This bipartisan panel was charged with the responsibility of examining facts and circumstances surrounding the single largest loss of life from an enemy attack on US soil. Additionally, the Commission was directed to identify lessons learned, and provide recommendations to prevent such attacks from occurring in the future.

For instance, one key objective of the strategy for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is to develop the “Ability to Attack Terrorists and Their Organizations.” But to accomplish this daunting task requires a unity of effort on a global scale. For the US portion of the GWOT, the 9/11 Commission made a number of observations and recommendations:

**Observation:** The September 11 attacks were a complex international operation, the product of years of planning. Bombings like those in Bali in 2003 or Madrid in 2004, while able to take hundreds of lives, can be mounted locally. Their requirements are far more modest in size and complexity. They are more difficult to thwart...Complex international terrorist operations aimed at launching a catastrophic attack cannot be mounted by just anyone in any place. Such operations appear to require

- time, space, and ability to perform competent planning and staff work;
- a command structure able to make decisions and possessing the authority and contacts to assemble needed people, money, and materials;
- opportunity and space to recruit, train, and select operatives with the needed skills and dedication, providing the time and structure required to socialize them into the terrorist cause, judge their trustworthiness, and hone their skills;

- a logistics network able to securely manage the travel of operatives, move money, and transport resources (like explosives) where they need to go;
- access, in the case of certain weapons, to the special materials needed for nuclear, chemical, radiological, or biological attack;
- reliable communications between coordinators and operatives; and
- opportunity to test the workability of the plan.

(United States Congress & White House, 2004, pp. 366-367)

Related to this subject, the 9/11 Commission made a number of recommendations, to include the following:

**Recommendation:** The US government must identify and prioritize actual or potential terrorist sanctuaries. For each, it should have a realistic strategy to keep possible terrorists insecure and on the run, using all elements of national power. We should reach out, listen to, and work with other countries that can help.

(United States Congress & White House, 2004, p. 367)

On the subject of “Unity of Effort in the Intelligence Community,” the 9/11 Commission pointed out the need to restructure the intelligence community given several problems that had become apparent before and after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Perhaps the one that stands out—most, in terms of its relevance to the National Intelligence-Defense relationship, is, to quote from the report:

**Observation:** Structural barriers to performing joint intelligence work. National intelligence is still organized around the collection disciplines of the home agencies, not the joint mission. The importance of integrated, all source analysis cannot be overstated. Without it, it is not possible to ‘connect the dots.’ No one component holds all the relevant information.

By contrast, in organizing national defense, the Goldwater-Nichols legislation of 1986 created joint commands for operations in the field, the Unified Command Plan. The services—the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps—organize, train, and equip their people and units to perform their missions. Then they assign personnel and units to the joint combatant commander, like the commanding general of the Central Command (CENTCOM). The Goldwater-Nichols Act required officers to serve tours outside their service in order to win promotion. The culture of



the Defense Department was transformed, its collective mind-set moved from service-specific to 'joint,' and its operations became more integrated.

(United States Congress & White House, 2004, pp. 408-409)

The 9/11 Commission goes on to discuss the current and future relationship between the Defense Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The Commission points out that rebuilding the analytic and human intelligence (HUMINT) collection capabilities of the CIA should be a full-time effort.

**Recommendation:** The CIA Director should emphasize (a) rebuilding the CIA analytic capabilities; (b) transforming the clandestine service by building its human intelligence capabilities; (c) developing a stronger language program, with high standards and sufficient financial incentives; (d) renewing emphasis on recruiting diversity among operations officers so they can blend more easily in foreign cities; (e) ensuring a seamless relationship between human source collection and signals collection at the operational level; and (f) stressing a better balance between unilateral and liaison operations.

(United States Congress & White House, 2004, p. 415)

**Recommendation:** Lead responsibility for directing and executing paramilitary operations, whether clandestine or covert, should shift to the Defense Department. There it should be consolidated with the capabilities for training, direction, and execution of such operations already being developed in the Special Operations Command.

(United States Congress & White House, 2004, p. 415)

The 9/11 Commission cites the post-9/11 Afghanistan precedent of using joint CIA-military teams for covert and clandestine operations as a good start. The Commission believes its proposals would deepen, broaden, and strengthen the CIA-military relationship along these lines; that each agency would concentrate on its comparative advantages in building capabilities for joint missions; and operations would be planned in common (United States Congress & White House, 2004, p. 416).

#### **E. NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE CULTURAL IMMERSION: THE THESIS CHARTED OUT**

The US National Security Strategy, US National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, and National Military Strategy documents make clear the need for increased military operations and intelligence efforts to disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations

as part of the GWOT. But, how do you collect time critical and actionable intelligence on small well-organized groups of terrorists? One possible method is by deploying *SOF skilled in cultural immersion*.

What is cultural immersion, a military-frame, and in wartime what are its tenets? How can these be applied in warfare? Have they been previously applied in times of war? And how can they be applied in support of Naval Special Warfare (NSW) missions?

This thesis will address these topics in detail. First, I will review and summarize Joint Doctrine and Policy, establishing their relevance and context in relation to current events. Through detailed case study analysis, in particular of Naval Special Warfare Operations in Vietnam, I will then enumerate the requirements for effective cultural immersion. I will also define cultural immersion, distinguishing its various features. I will sketch out an existing framework for best employing cultural immersion as a practical and viable asset in support of all forms of NSW missions. Finally, I will offer recommendations about how cultural immersion training and execution might find application within the realm of NSW.

## II. STRATEGY AND POLICY

*We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.*

President George W. Bush

June 1, 2002

(White House, 2003, p. 13, emphasis added)

### A. US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: SETTING THE STAGE FOR CULTURAL IMMERSION

On September 17, 2002, President Bush addressed the threat of terrorism:

Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us. To defeat this threat we must make use of every tool in our arsenal-military power, better homeland defense, law enforcement, intelligence, and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing. The war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration...The United States and countries cooperating with us must not allow the terrorists to develop new home bases. Together, we will seek to deny them sanctuary at every turn...So we must be prepared to defeat our enemies' plans, using the best intelligence and proceeding with deliberation. History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act.

(The White House, 2004, pp. iv-v)

**Section III.** In the third section of the National Security Strategy (NSS) the President defines the enemy and discusses the importance of strengthening alliances to defeat global terrorism and to prevent attacks against the US and our friends. The enemy is defined, not as a single political regime or person or religion or ideology, but instead, as those who would use acts of terrorism carried out in a "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents" (White House, 2004, p. 5). A point is made that the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) will be fought on many fronts by an elusive enemy and progress in the GWOT will come through "persistent accumulation of successes-some seen, some unseen" (White House, 2004, p. 5). The President states the priority for the GWOT is "first to disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations of global

reach and attack their leadership; command, control, and communications; materials support; and finances” (White House, 2004, p. 5). The directed means by which to achieve these ends is through direct and continuous action, by “identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders...” (White House, 2004, p. 6) and by collaborative measures with US allies and friends.

**Section V.** The fifth section of the NSS deals with preventing enemies from threatening the US, its allies, and its friends with weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The President states the US “must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction” (White House, 2004, p. 14). The US response to this threat must be through “innovation in the use of military forces, modern technologies...and increased emphasis on intelligence collection and analysis...and, when necessary, interdict enabling technologies and materials” (White House, 2004, p. 14). The directed means by which to achieve these ends is “build better, more integrated intelligence capabilities to provide timely, accurate information on threats, wherever they may emerge...” (White House, 2004, p. 16).

**Section VIII.** The eighth section of the NSS covers the developing agendas for cooperative action with the other main centers of global power. The President talks of effective coalition leadership requiring clear priorities and an appreciation of others’ interests. In his discussion of others the President refers to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the “need to streamline and increase the flexibility of command structures to meet new operational demands and the associated requirements of training, integrating, and experimenting with new force configurations” (White House, 2004, p. 26). The President also talks of Asian alliances and states the importance of “maintaining forces in the region that reflect our commitments to our allies, our requirements, our technological advances, and the strategic environment...” (White House, 2004, p. 26).

**Section IX.** The ninth section of the NSS is perhaps the key component in establishing the relationship between the NSS and the need reflects how essential it is to focus on cultural immersion and social networking. The President speaks of value added by the forward presence of the US military and the new military focus on “how an

adversary might fight rather than where and when a war might occur” (White House, 2004, p. 29). He also talks about how innovation within the military will rest on “experimentation with new approaches to warfare...exploiting US intelligence advantages...the goal being provide the President with a wider range of military options” (White House, 2004, p. 30).

The President places emphasis on the importance of intelligence and the necessity to enhance current US capabilities:

**Intelligence**-and how we use it-is our first line of defense against terrorists and the threat posed by hostile states. The intelligence community is coping with the challenge of following a far more complex and elusive set of targets (than it did during the Cold War). We must transform our intelligence capabilities and build new ones to keep pace with the nature of these threats.

(White House, 2004, p. 30, emphasis added)

The President goes on to discuss the need to strengthen intelligence warning and analysis for national and homeland security citing the following initiatives in this area:

- Strengthening the authority of the Director of Central Intelligence to lead the development and actions of the Nation’s foreign intelligence capabilities;
- Establishing a new framework for intelligence warning that provides seamless and integrated warning across the spectrum of threats facing the nation and our allies;
- Continuing to develop new methods of collecting information to sustain our intelligence advantage;
- Investing in future capabilities while working to protect them through a more vigorous effort to prevent the compromise of intelligence capabilities; and
- Collecting intelligence against the terrorist danger across the government with all source analysis.

(White House, 2004, p. 30)

Throughout the NSS, the President has declared the need for improved intelligence, military, and coalition support in the GWOT. As the Commander-in-Chief, he has requested new capabilities for collecting intelligence—to include cultural

immersion and social networking—be brought to bear against hostile threats the US currently faces. The next step is to evaluate the military’s perspective on these issues.

**B. US NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY: DEFINING REQUIREMENTS FOR GWOT AND CULTURAL IMMERSION IN THE MILITARY**

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Richard Myers, has stated the “National Military Strategy’ (NMS) conveys my message to the Joint Force on the strategic direction the Armed Forces of the United States should follow to support the National Security and Defense Strategies in this time of war” (JCS, 2004a, p. iii). He goes on to enumerate three priorities for success in the GWOT:

- **Win the War on Terrorism.** We must act now to stop terrorists before they attack the US again and root out transnational terrorist networks, sever their connections with state sponsors, eliminate their bases of operation...The mission requires the full integration of all instruments of national power, the cooperation and participation of friends and allies and the support of the American people.
- **Enhance our ability to fight as a joint force.** We must strengthen collaboration among our joint forces, agencies at all levels of government and multinational partners. Key to such collaboration is an improved ability to collect, process, and share information.
- **Transform the Armed Forces.** Fielding new capabilities and adopting new operational concepts while actively taking the fight to terrorists. Transformation requires a combination of technology, intellect and cultural adjustments—adjustments that reward innovation and creativity.

(JCS, 2004a, p. iii, emphasis added)

**Section I.** The NMS introduces US military objectives for supporting the National Defense Strategy (NDS): protecting the US; preventing conflict and surprise attack; and prevailing against adversaries. According to the NMS one of the key functional concepts for achieving these objectives is battlespace awareness. The NMS reemphasizes the importance of a capabilities-based approach to force design and planning that focuses less on a specific adversary or where a conflict might occur and more on how an adversary might fight. By following this joint operating concept (JOC) the US Joint Operating Force (JOF) can adapt and succeed across a wide variety of operations (JCS, 2004a, p. 3). The key to this concept is the ability to “anticipate and

rapidly adjust to changes in the security environment to ensure the US improves its qualitative advantage over a more diverse set of adversaries-now and in the future” (JCS, 2004a, p. 3).

The focus of the military is on a wider range of enemies than in the past. Under the NMS adversaries include: non-state actors, terrorist networks, international criminal organizations, and illegal armed groups that threaten/undermine stability and security; and pose an irregular threat to the US and its Allies (JCS, 2004a, p. 4). These adversaries use unconventional methods to conduct their missions and constantly seek to improve their asymmetric capabilities in order to target civilian populations, economic centers, and symbolic locations as a way to attack US and allies’ political will and resolve (JCS, 2004a, p. 4). The NMS discusses the importance of intelligence systems for countering these current and future threats.

**Intelligence systems** must allow commanders to understand enemy intent, predict threat actions, and detect adversary movements, providing them the time necessary to take preventative measures. Long before conflict occurs, these intelligence systems must help provide a more thorough understanding of adversaries’ motivations, goals, and organizations to determine effective deterrent courses of action.

(JCS, 2004a, p. 5, emphasis added)

The NMS goes on to discuss the diverse operational regions for the military and the complexity of the battlespace. This battlespace presents unique demands on military organizations:

There exists an ‘arc of instability’ stretching from the Western Hemisphere, through Africa and Middle East and extends to Asia. There are areas in this arc that serve as breeding grounds for threats to US interests. Within these areas rogue states provide sanctuary to terrorists, protecting them from surveillance and attack. Other adversaries take advantage of ungoverned space and under-governed territories from which they prepare plans, train forces, and launch attacks.

(JCS, 2004a, p. 5, emphasis added)

**Section II.** Within this section the NMS details the three previously mentioned supporting military objectives of the NDS. The “Protecting the US” objective portion discusses the fact that US commanders cannot rely only on reactive operations and a robust defensive posture, but must instead follow a strategy of anticipatory self-defense.

In short, when directed, US commanders will preempt, in self-defense, adversaries that pose a threat of grave harm. The US will counter threats close to their source. US forces, while operating in key regions such as those in the “arc of instability,” will, in essence, take the fight to the enemy. It will be important for them to coordinate mission requirements from US theater security activities and multinational partners to access information and intelligence critical to anticipating and understanding new threats.

Part of the information process is working with other nation’s militaries and other governmental agencies to establish favorable security conditions and increase the capabilities of partners. “For example, intelligence partnerships with other nations can take advantage of foreign expertise and areas of focus and provide access to previously denied areas.” (JCS, 2004a, p. 10)

The “Prevent Conflict and Surprise Attacks” piece of the NMS discusses the importance of vigilance in identifying conflict and anticipating adversary actions. This readiness is accomplished through forward presence which is vital to time critical targeting missions. Having solid intelligence capabilities that allow commanders to act rapidly is a key component of mission execution.

**Preventative missions** require shared, ‘actionable intelligence’, and the rules of engagement that allow commanders to make timely decisions. This decision making process stresses collaboration, speed and responsiveness-key ingredients required when exploiting time-sensitive opportunities as they arise, especially against mobile, time critical targets. These missions require exacting analysis and synthesis of intelligence gathered by a combination of capabilities, including human and technical collectors. These operations will generally involve coordinated efforts with other agencies and departments in the US government, placing a premium on information sharing, intelligence and collaborative planning.

(JCS, 2004a, p. 12, emphasis added)

**Section III.** This section of the NMS focuses on the US force requirements and their applications in securing the battlespace. US forces must be flexible, modular, and deployable with the ability to utilize each service’s strengths. They must be able to anticipate and adapt to changing threat conditions. The US forces must be networked in the regions in which they operate and have the ability to “collect, analyze and rapidly disseminate intelligence and other relevant information from the national and tactical



levels, then use that information to decide and act faster than opponents” (JCS, 2004a, p. 14). Another key aspect of the force of choice for the US is one that has “informed and empowered joint leaders who combine superior technical skills, operational experience, intellectual understanding and cultural expertise” (JCS, 2004a, p. 14) to employ military capabilities and perform critical joint roles.

Section III of the NMS also lays out the applications of the various types of US forces, to include the use of conventional and special operations forces (SOF), and their importance to developing regional alliances and coalitions.

Strong regional alliances and coalitions enhance expeditionary capabilities by providing physical access to host nation infrastructure and other support. They also provide access to regional intelligence that enables the precise application of military capabilities and allows the US to focus combat power more effectively at the critical time and place...Such information and intelligence sharing helps build trust and confidence essential to strong international partnerships...The application of force against widely dispersed adversaries, including transnational terrorist organizations, will require improved intelligence collection and analysis systems.

(JCS, 2004a, p. 15)

Section III provides general details on the relationship between information and intelligence for securing the battlespace. In order to secure the battlespace US forces must have battlespace awareness. To gain awareness US forces must be given the doctrine, tools, and training to more effectively synchronize military capabilities with non-DOD assets. New ways of thinking about acquiring, integrating, using and sharing information must be pursued. This is in addition to new architectures for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets that provide knowledge of adversaries.

Persistent surveillance, ISR management, collaborative analysis and on-demand dissemination facilitate battlespace awareness. Developing the intelligence products to support this level of awareness requires collection systems and assured access to air, land, sea...**Human collectors are a critical element** in the collection system; they provide the ability to discern the intention of adversaries and produce actionable intelligence for plans and orders. Intelligence analysts operating well forward must

have the ability to reach back to comprehensive, integrated databases and to horizontally integrate information and intelligence...

(JCS, 2004a, p. 17, emphasis added)

**Section V.** In this section of the NMS, one information initiative is discussed as part of the ongoing effort to ensure military superiority. The initiative is designed to facilitate interagency integration through the implementation of Counter-Terrorism (CT) Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs) at five regional and two global combatant commands (JCS, 2004a, p. 21). The JIACGs' purpose is to facilitate information sharing across the interagency community.

The NMS lays out a number of priorities and objectives to include battlespace awareness, regional information and intelligence, cultural expertise, and flexible force options. The US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) meanwhile has a critical role in providing the specialized forces necessary to meet these priorities objectives of the NSS, NDS, and NMS.

**C. USSOCOM POSTURE STATEMENT: REFINING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SOF WITH CULTURAL IMMERSION SKILLS FOR GWOT**

The USSOCOM Posture Statement lays out the mission, responsibilities, core tasks, priorities, characteristics of SOF, and future vision for SOF characteristics and employment. USSOCOM and its four subordinate commands have been actively engaged in the vast majority of global conflicts since USSOCOM's establishment under the "Cohen-Nunn Amendment to the DOD Authorization Act of 1987" (HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 9). Additionally, USSOCOM has specific responsibilities it must adhere to under US Law Title 10 (Sec 167) to include the "formulation and submitting of requirements for intelligence support" (HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 10). USSOCOM is one of the nine US combatant commands directly responsible to the President and Secretary of Defense.

As a functional combatant command, **USSOCOM has been given lead responsibility for waging the war on terrorism.** Its duties in connection with this responsibility include planning, directing, and executing special operations in the conduct of the war on terrorism. USSOCOM also

provides special operations forces (SOF) to support the Geographic Combatant Commander's theater security cooperation plans.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 11, emphasis added)

**Mission of USSOCOM:** to plan, direct, and execute special operations in the conduct of the GWOT in order to disrupt, defeat, and destroy terrorist networks that threaten the US, its citizens and interests worldwide. USSOCOM organizes, trains, and equips special operations forces provided geographic combatant commanders, American ambassadors and their country teams.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 4, emphasis added)

**Special operations** (SO) are operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or discreet capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations by, with, or through indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional military actions in the following ways: greater degree of physical and political risk; unique operational techniques, mode of employment, and independence from friendly support; detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 7, emphasis added)

Special operations forces (SOF) are those forces assigned, by USSOCOM, to execute the afore-mentioned special operations. They have specialized skills, equipment and tactics, are regionally focused, have language skills, are politically and culturally sensitive, operate with economy of force, and can operate jointly or autonomously. Their ubiquitous presence as “Global Scouts” serves to: assure allies and friends of US government resolve; shape the pre-conflict battlespace to set conditions favorable to the US; and provide a strategic economy of force in areas of the world left uncovered by the commitments of conventional forces to other priorities (HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 28).

The SOF assigned to the four USSOCOM subordinate commands have nine core tasks which they are expected to accomplish. These core tasks include: “Counterterrorism (CT), Counter Proliferation (CP), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Direct Action (DA), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Information Operations (IO),

Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), and Civil Affairs Operations (CAO)” (HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 36).

Although counterterrorism has long been a core task of SOF, the events of September 11, 2001 focused national interest on several urgent national priorities: Destroying al’Qaida and other parts of the international terrorist network; speeding transformation of the military; countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and associated delivery systems; and strengthening intelligence collection and dissemination.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 36)

One of the predictors for where USSOCOM is going in the future is the Commander’s “Vision Statement.” Some of the key points within the USSOCOM vision include: The command taking an active role in keeping special operations special and relevant with a special emphasis on the importance of regional expertise, presence, and influence.

**The Vision.** To develop ‘the most capable special operations force, relevant to the needs of our nation ...any time ...any place ...any adversary’...The Command must constantly strive to keep the ‘special’ in special operations...Any future special operations force will be: Sized, trained, and equipped to engage in any threat environment against any adversary; Culturally, linguistically, politically, and regionally focused; Rapidly deployable; Capable of conducting exceptionally-precise discriminate strikes against specific targets; Able to achieve operational and tactical superiority through surprise, speed, violence of action, and through the ability to facilitate the precise application of massive conventional firepower; Flexible, tactically, operationally, and strategically agile joint forces that can develop and execute unconventional, audacious, and high pay-off courses of action. Given these basic parameters, it is clear that SOF of the future will be called upon to employ unorthodox approaches, at any time, in any place, against any adversary, toward the end of achieving lasting strategic effects that are beneficial to the United States.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 65, emphasis added)

**Regional Expertise, Presence and Influence.** SOF conduct and influence operations anywhere, with minimal restrictions, through an extensive personal understanding and a network of relationships throughout the region. SOF are regionally focused, possessing extensive linguistic skills and cultural understanding. The SOF Warrior is also a diplomat, and as such utilizes recurring deployments to increase language skills, cultural awareness, and to build the military and political contacts that contribute

to future operations and activities. Healthy working relationships are maintained with potential joint, interagency, coalition and non-state partners. The effective presence and embedded interagency integration produced by these relationships provides SOF a footing from which to influence events. Through recurring interaction with current and potential coalition partners, SOF are able to favorably influence situations toward U.S. national interests. SOF presence and influence serve multiple roles in peacetime and before, during, and after conflict. SOF forward presence and regional expertise allow for ‘first response’ abilities when required and, permit a full range of unconventional military options against a targeted entity. SOF are immediately ready upon arrival to occupy and influence the area of operations as prescribed by the mission and possess the flexibility to be tailored to task.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 67, emphasis added)

Future missions might include operations for psychological effect, low visibility strike operations, advanced unconventional warfare, special forms of reconnaissance, human and technical information and intelligence collection operations and strategic influence operations (HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 72). Given such responsibilities, we might ask who will be the SOF assigned to conduct these “future missions,” as well as continue to support the nine core missions?

#### **D. NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE: SOLUTION TO MARITIME AND LITTORAL BATTLESPACE AWARENESS IN GWOT**

The mission of the Naval Special Warfare Command (CNSWC) is to prepare NSW forces to carry out assigned missions and to develop maritime special operations strategy, doctrine, and tactics (Naval Special Warfare Command, 2004). The Commander of NSWC exercises operational control over all United States-based NSW forces and as such is responsible for the training, equipping, and any additional support required by these forces. CNSWC is also responsible for providing trained and ready NSW forces to theater Special Operations Commanders (SOCs) and other—maritime, ground, and air—component commanders (Naval Special Warfare Command, 2004).

NSW core mission areas include SR, and DA. NSW also CT, UW, FID, information warfare assistance (IW), security assistance, counter-drug operations (CD), personnel recovery (PR) and hydrographic reconnaissance (Commander United States Naval Special Warfare Command, no date). NSW forces can operate independently or integrate with other U.S. special operations forces or within U.S. Navy carrier battle

groups [now Carrier Strike Groups] and amphibious ready groups [now Expeditionary Strike Groups] (Naval Special Warfare Command, 2004).

The current CNSWC's vision focuses on counter-terrorism and a return to the other core Sea-Air-Land Team (SEAL) competencies, and initiatives that will further increase Navy and joint interoperability ("SEALs Focus Is On Terrorism, Core Missions, Interoperability," 2003). The primary mission areas for NSW consist of SR, and DA ("SEALs Focus Is on Terrorism, Core Missions, Interoperability," 2003).

**1) Counterterrorism (CT)** – is USSOCOM's number one mission. CT produces effective protective measures to reduce the probability of a successful terrorist attack against U.S. interests. This task involves offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism. SOF are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct covert, clandestine, or discreet CT missions in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments. These missions include, but are not limited to intelligence operations, attacks against terrorist networks and infrastructures, hostage rescue, recovery of sensitive material from terrorist organizations, and non-kinetic activities aimed at the ideologies or motivations that spawn terrorism.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 36, emphasis added)

**2) Special Reconnaissance (SR)** – reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as special operations in hostile, denied or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces. These actions provide an additive capability for commanders and may supplement other intelligence collection when conventional reconnaissance and surveillance actions are limited by weather, terrain, or adversary countermeasures.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 36)

**3) Direct Action (DA)** – the conduct of short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets of strategic or operational significance, employing specialized military capabilities. Direct action differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the use of discriminating force to achieve specific objectives.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 36)

When considering that two thirds of the Earth's inhabitants are located on or near large bodies of water it would seem to make sense that NSW forces be considered for cultural immersion training and subsequent missions that would utilize cultural immersion skills. NSW forces are still relatively small when compared to the other US SOF, and thus enables them to adapt easily to changing environments. Also of note: NSW forces and their predecessors have been involved via some form of special operations in every major (and minor) conflict since WWII.

During WWII, groups of US military volunteers trained for, and were placed into, some of the most hazardous environments the War had to offer, including covert operations behind enemy lines. These volunteers made up the Scouts and Raiders, Naval Combat Demolition Units (NCDU), Office of Strategic Services Maritime Units (MU) and Operational Swimmers, Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) or "frogmen," and Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons (Commander United States Naval Special Warfare Command, no date). None of these units are in existence today but they all utilized various forms of unconventionality to achieve their mission success. Moreover, these units contributed greatly to the development of the modern day SEAL teams, Special Boat teams (SBT), and SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) teams, all of which today belong to the Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC).

During the Korean War the UDTs provided hydrographic and special reconnaissance (SR) in support of the landing at Inchon, as well as demolition raids on bridges and tunnels along the Korean coastline (Commander United States Naval Special Warfare Command, no date). The UDTs were also called upon to work with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to train South Korean guerillas for raids, demolitions, and rescues of downed aircrew (Dockery, 1991, p. 84).

In 1962, in response to President Kennedy's directive that each of the U.S. armed forces develop an unconventional capability, the Navy drew from its pool of UDT personnel to form separate units called SEAL Teams. In January of that year, SEAL Team ONE (Pacific Fleet) and SEAL Team TWO (Atlantic Fleet) were commissioned. Their mission areas focused on unconventional warfare (UW), counter-guerilla warfare, and clandestine operations in both blue and brown water environments (Commander

United States Naval Special Warfare Command, no date). In Vietnam, the SEALs, UDTs, and their riverine boat units worked very closely with Lien Doc Nquoi Nhia (LDNN, South Vietnamese frogmen), provincial reconnaissance units (PRU), Montagnards, and Chieu Hoi (ex-Viet Cong) to conduct numerous intelligence and offensive operations (Dockery, 1991, p. 209, emphasis added). In 1967, the Naval Operations Support Groups were renamed Naval Special Warfare Groups (NSWG).

Post-Vietnam War operations that NSW forces have participated in include: URGENT FURY (Grenada 1983); EARNEST WILL (Persian Gulf 1987-1990); JUST CAUSE (Panama 1989-1990); and DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM (Middle East/Persian Gulf 1990-1991). Additionally, NSW has conducted missions in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and Liberia.

(Commander United States Naval Special Warfare Command, no date)

NSW forces continue to conduct their missions in support of the GWOT. NSW forces have played vital roles in both ENDURING FREEDOM (Afghanistan, 2001); and IRAQI FREEDOM (Middle East/Persian Gulf 2003-Present).

In response to the attacks on America Sept. 11, 2001, Naval Special Warfare forces put operators on the ground in Afghanistan in October. The first military flag officer to set foot in Afghanistan was a Navy SEAL in charge of all special operations for Central Command. Additionally, a Navy SEAL captain commanded Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) South. Commonly referred to as Task Force K-BAR, the task force included U.S. Navy, Army, Air Force and Coalition SOF forces. During Operation Enduring Freedom, NSW forces carried out more than 75 special reconnaissance and direct action missions, destroying more than 500,000 pounds of explosives and weapons; positively identifying enemy personnel and conducting Leadership Interdiction Operations (LIO) in the search for terrorists trying to escape by sea-going vessels.

Naval Special Warfare has played a significant role in Operation Iraqi Freedom, employing the largest number of SEALs and SWCC in its history. NSW forces were instrumental in numerous special reconnaissance and direct action missions including the securing of the southern oil infrastructures of the Al Faw peninsula and the off-shore gas and oil terminals; the clearing of the Khawr Abd Allah and Khawr Az Zubayr waterways that enabled humanitarian aid to be delivered to the vital port city of Umm Qasr; reconnaissance of the Shat Al Arab waterway; capture of high value targets, raids on suspected chemical, biological and radiological sites; and the first POW rescue since WWII.



Additionally, NSW is also fighting the war on terrorism in other global hot spots including the Philippines and the Horn of Africa.

(Commander United States Naval Special Warfare Command, no date)

To continue the successful accomplishment of their missions NSW forces will need the best possible actionable intelligence available. Which raises another question...**how will NSW forces obtain this actionable intelligence?**

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### **III. CULTURAL IMMERSION IN EARLY TO MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY WARFARE**

#### **A. T.E. LAWRENCE AND EARLY CULTURAL IMMERSION DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR CAMPAIGN FOR ARABIA**

The quintessential and, perhaps, the best known practitioner of early twentieth century cultural immersion and networking is Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence. As a British Intelligence and Liaison Officer, he set the precedent for the last hundred years of cultural immersion in warfare. His exploits in Arabia make for great tales of adventure and yet are still offer relevance for cultural immersion in modern day warfare.

Lawrence was sent into the Arab Revolt (1916-1918) with orders to establish relations with the local tribal leaders in order to organize them into fighting units and intelligence support against the Turks, one of Germany's allies. The British hope was the defeat of Turkey while Great Britain waged its primary campaign against Germany during the First World War (WWI). For Lawrence the challenge at hand was how to establish solid working relationships with the most effective tribal leaders in the region to enable the British plan.

The Grand Shereef Hussein, with some British support, on June 9, 1916 attempted to bring life to the Arab Revolt by attacking Turkish and German fortifications in the cities of Medina, Jeddah, and Mecca but was unsuccessful in progressing with the Revolt when his forces ran out of ammunition (Thomas, 1924, p. 76). Lawrence believed the failures of the previous British-encouraged Arab revolution against the Turks were due to faulty leadership, or rather to the lack of leadership, Arab and English. In an effort to find effective Arab leaders he went down to Arabia to meet and evaluate its *great men*.

The first, the Sherif of Mecca, we knew to be aged. I found Abdulla too clever, Ali too clean, and Zeid too cool. Then I rode up-country to Feisal, and found him the leader with the necessary fire, and yet with reason to give effect to our science. His tribesmen seemed a sufficient instrument, and his hills to provide natural advantage. So I returned confidently to Egypt, and told my chiefs how Mecca was defended not by Rabegh, but by Feisal in Jebel Subh.

(Lawrence, 1938, p. 8)

Once a reliable Arab leader and reliable tribes were identified, Lawrence drew upon his cultural immersion skills (regional expertise from past excursions to Arabia, his mapping skills developed while in the military, his language skills, his understanding of the people through his previous interactions with them, as well as his formal education) to accomplish the tasks laid out before him. Lawrence traveled extensively up and down the Semitic East before WWI working as an archaeologist and Arab supervisor at the various dig sites, and through the course of his travels, he learned the manners of the villagers, tribesmen, and citizens of Syria and Mesopotamia. He was not wealthy and therefore had to “mix with the humbler classes, those seldom met by European travelers” and went on to say “thus my experiences gave me an unusual angle of view, which enabled me to understand and think for the ignorant many as well as for the more enlightened whose rare opinions mattered” (Lawrence, 1938, p. 55). Lawrence also admitted that even with his unique skills and diverse background, he could not pass as an Arab, but instead chose to work among them. He specifically states:

I was sent to these Arabs as a stranger, unable to think their thoughts or subscribe their beliefs, but charged by duty to lead them forward and to develop to the highest any movement of theirs profitable to England in her war. If I could not assume their character, I could at least conceal my own, and pass among them without evident friction, neither a discord not a critic but an unnoticed influence.

(Lawrence, 1938, p. 30)

To further his efforts to blend in Lawrence dressed in Arab clothes at the behest of the senior tribal leader, Sherif Feisal. The purpose was to allow Lawrence to immerse himself and thus move freely amongst the various tribal hosts and local peoples without raising the suspicions a more conventional western uniform would provoke.

I should find it better for my own part, since it was a comfortable dress in which to live Arab-fashion as we must do. Besides, the tribesmen would then understand how to take me. The only wearers of khaki in their experience had been Turkish officers, before whom they took up an instinctive defense. If I wore Meccan clothes, they would behave to me as though I were really one of the leaders; and I might slip in and out of Feisal's tent without making a sensation which he had to explain away each time to strangers.

(Lawrence, 1963, p. 95)

According to Lowell Thomas in his book *With Lawrence in Arabia* (1924), Lawrence's success in moving into some of the most inner circles of Arabia can be attributed to several factors: he demonstrated strong resolve to accomplish anything he set out to do; he would lead in battles; he possessed a detailed knowledge of their intricate customs; he demonstrated an "apparent complete mastery" of the Koran and complex Mohammedan law (p.365); he wore the native dress of the people, thus paying them a great compliment (p.366); he was observant; and he was ever mindful of the words he used and actions he engaged in so as not to offend his Arab hosts; he was superb in 10 languages in addition to being able to manipulate many of the Arabic dialects of the Near East (p. 372).

Lawrence made several key observations about his own military intelligence community. These observations hold some pertinence and, perhaps, a warning to present-day NSW efforts in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) regarding the importance of effective cultural immersion and networking. For instance he commented on the fact that his superior in the military intelligence branch had never been to Turkey, or read about it, and knew no Arabic. The staff did not supply the necessary knowledge, as none of them knew Turkish, and only one individual could speak Arabic. This individual was an office man (a clerk, a non-field operative), who was located in Basra and ran the Secret Service Work. He was not co-located with the ranking officer and, therefore, no information was passed between the two.

It is rather difficult for us to realize that the Intelligence Staff at such places as Basra, Amara, Ali Gharbi, Sheikh Saad, Nasiriya, Ahwaz, and with the Corps in the fighting line, cannot speak any of the local languages. They do all their examination of agents, prisoners and refugees, through interpreters. They never learnt or read anything of the manners of Turk or Arab, or of their customs. They know nothing of the country beyond them: they cannot test an agent by cross-questioning: the supply of good interpreters is very limited, so that many of the finer points that make the difference between obvious truth and falsehood are missed. Also you get gross errors of place or number, besides confusion of technical military terms. They get their knowledge of Turkish communications from various military reports...: they learn the Turkish Army from the Turkish Army Handbook, and they follow events in Turkey from the Cairo Bulletin, which is a sort of bible to them.

(Wilson, 1990, p. 949)

As he had intended, Lawrence was able to use his cultural immersion skills to cultivate a genuine air of trust among his Arab hosts. With the establishment of rapport, Lawrence was able to personally organize and lead some of the most successful assaults, ambushes, and demolition raids against Turkish fortifications and railroads during the Arabian Campaign, which in turn allowed the British to continue their larger focus on fighting Germany in Europe.

What, we might wonder, do Lawrence's cultural immersion efforts mean to modern day Naval Special Warfare (NSW) operations? NSW, like other war fighting entities, relies on actionable intelligence reports to conduct its missions. But, without ground truth information of the intended battle space, mission success is potentially degraded. We see this most vividly when we consider our position today with that of the US during the Second World War (WWII).

## **B. FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN SOF DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND EARLY BEGINNINGS OF CULTURAL IMMERSION IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Before America's involvement in the Second World War, the United States possessed a limited and poorly coordinated capacity for intelligence gathering. The US seemed to have an aversion to immersing any personnel in other countries for fear of being accused of spying. The responsibility for gathering foreign intelligence fell to the State Department, the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), the War Department's Military Intelligence Division (MID or G-2), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). According to Warner (1991), the WWII intelligence process could be defined as follows:

The process of information gathering falls in two distinct categories: one is observation, such as that provided by aerial photography; the other is information provided by agents or spies...in the second category comes the whole army of spies, agents, paid 'neutral' informers and listeners (p. 120).

The State Department diplomats obtained intelligence through official business or secret meetings with carefully cultivated contacts. The State's Division of Information was little more than a press office that provided new releases for general public consumption. The ONI and G-2 were understaffed and under funded. Most of the ONI work was conducted through attachés serving in overseas postings. The attachés were

strictly curtailed in their level of intelligence gathering. By 1939, ONI had 17 attaché posts, nine in Europe and eight in South America. The G-2 in 1940 had a mere 80 total staffers. The FBI had no mandate to gather foreign intelligence until 1940, and when it did establish its Special Intelligence Service, it focused on operations in Latin America only. Information discrimination was a significant problem up all chains of command. There was no clearing house to ensure the departments shared their findings. “ONI candidly summed up the situation: ‘A real undercover foreign intelligence service, equipped and able to carry on espionage, counter-intelligence, etc. does not exist’” (O’Donnell, 2004, p. xiii).

However, on July 11, 1941, President Roosevelt, under pressure from the British, took a decisive step toward improving intelligence matters. He ordered the establishment of a new White House agency, the Coordinator of Information (COI). The COI had a significant mandate:

Authority to collect and analysis all information and data, which may bear upon the national security; to correlate such information and data; and to make such information and data available to the President and to such departments and officials of the Government as the President may determine...(O’Donnell, 2004, p.xiii).

The President selected Major General William “Wild Bill” Donovan as the director of the COI. Donovan was a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient from WWI, as well as previous assistant attorney general under Calvin Coolidge. He was charged with traveling overseas to assess the British staying power in the war. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in a show of good faith, granted Donovan complete access to all of Britain’s greatest intelligence and defense secrets. The President was impressed with Donovan’s reports and sent him to tour the Mediterranean and Balkans. These trips would provide him with several ideas for COI’s intelligence and cultural immersion capabilities.

Following one of the greatest intelligence failures of the war, namely the December 7, 1941 attacks on Pearl Harbor, intelligence quickly became a primary concern for the US, and specifically for the newly formed Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Donovan was still struggling to integrate COI efforts with those of the military, but a major stumbling block was the fact that the service chiefs tended to rely on their own

intelligence braches for information. With his hand tied, Donovan, in a political effort to gain military support and resources, acted as a lead proponent, suggesting that COI be brought under the control of JCS. On June 13, 1942, the president officially endorsed the idea and the COI was renamed the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

A central element in the OSS was what today we call special operations forces (SOF). SOF could be broken down into small teams of operatives that would create disruptions behind enemy lines and gather intelligence. The OSS departments under Donovan included:

- **Research & Analysis (R&A)** for intelligence analysis.
- **Research & Development (R&D)** for weapons and equipment development.
- **Morale Operations (MO)** for subversive, disguised, “black” propaganda.
- **Maritime Units (MU)** for transporting agents and supplies to resistance groups. MU frogmen (one of the precursors to modern NSW units) also conducted naval sabotage and reconnaissance.
- **X-2** for counterespionage.
- **Secret Intelligence (SI)** covered agents in the field who covertly gathered intelligence.
- **Special Operations (SO)** for sabotage, subversion, fifth-column movements, and guerilla warfare.
- **Operational Groups (OG)** also for sabotage and guerilla warfare, made up of highly trained foreign-language-speaking commando teams.

(O'Donnell, 2004, p. xvi)

Donovan utilized his personal contacts to recruit the best and brightest. The OSS often went to top universities, law firms, and major corporations for their operatives. The new recruits tended to be young and innovative. Unusual, unorthodox, creative thinking was fostered within the OSS. A battery of tests was used to assess intelligence and aptitudes of prospective recruits. Once past the examinations, the trainees were funneled into the OSS training pipeline. Schooling for the OSS trainees included infiltration



techniques, weapons handling, demolitions, sabotage (including railroad infrastructure), hand-to-hand combat, intelligence gathering (to include field practical examinations on immersion and agent handling), and language skills.

The OSS contributed to the over-all Allied war effort throughout WWII by providing useful tactical, operational, and strategic intelligence, and by promoting and supporting resistance movements in enemy-occupied territory. The OSS set the standards for modern day special operations and intelligence gathering. The OSS was active in every theater of the war.

### **1. Europe and Africa**

In late 1942, the OSS dispatched instructors overseas to train foreign nationals for work in Europe. Many of the OSS operators were also trained by the British, including the Jedburgh program (three-man Special Operations [SO] teams that jumped into France, Holland, and Belgium on or after D-Day) (O'Donnell, 2004, pp.12-13). The Jeds were each handpicked and went through a rigorous training program. Their expertise included demolitions, communications, training of partisans, and intelligence work. The Jeds took on an advisory role and acted as rallying points for the Resistance (culturally immersed local personnel). Fourteen of these Jed teams, along with the British SAS (Special Air Service), organized 20,000 members of the Resistance, and as a result of their efforts large numbers of Germans were tied down in open battles (O'Donnell, 2004, p.176). They also generated intelligence on one of the last key German held bridges (not demolished) at Nijmegen which ultimately resulted in US forces capturing it and using it to move heavy armored vehicles and personnel across an otherwise impassable river system (O'Donnell, 2004, p. 213).

OSS operators utilized cultural immersion to move within societies and develop reliable information networks, thus enabling them to gather viable code-breaking information on programs such as the German Enigma. One female operator's efforts included obtaining cipher information from a *turned* Italian admiral, which was then used to assess the Italian fleet activities and ultimately disable the Italian Navy for the duration of the war.

Other activities early on in the war included work by an OSS-managed group known as Murphy's "Twelve Apostles." Its personnel included Colonel William Eddy, who possessed optimal cultural immersion skills. Eddy was born in Syria of missionary parents; he spoke fluent Arabic and was a scholar and war hero from WWI (O'Donnell, 2004, p. 31). This OSS team was responsible for successfully recruiting informants and organizing intelligence gathered on ports, landing beaches, and key military targets in North Africa in support of Operation Torch, November 8, 1942.

One of the most daunting tasks for Donovan was attempting to get OSS members into Germany. Unlike France, there was no Resistance to fall back on if the operators got into trouble. The actual challenge for Donovan was finding German speakers who could blend into German society. The OSS London Labor Desk suggested using some of the hundreds of German Communist exiles in England. Some of the operators chosen were anti-Nazis with a background in German underground movements. They were parachuted into Germany and established networks of trusted agents and supporters. They gathered intelligence on potential landing zones for air borne assaults and German troop movements.

## **2. China-Burma-India (CBI)**

In Burma and South-East Asia operations, personnel were selected because of their backgrounds, language skills, and levels of cultural immersion in the region. The man selected to be the Commander of all US forces in the China-Burma-India was Major General Joseph Stilwell. Stilwell was an excellent choice from a cultural immersion standpoint. He had spent 13 years in China and spoke fluent Mandarin. He was constrained in the numbers and types of forces he had at his disposal, but through resourcefulness and a proposal supplied by the OSS, a detachment of men was formed with the mission of training, deploying, and supporting native agents in conducting intelligence gathering and direct action (DA) guerilla warfare against the Japanese (Ward, 1991, p. 17).

Detachment 101 of the OSS, formed April 14, 1942, was one of the first units in US Military history to be created with the express purpose of operating behind enemy lines. Detachment 101 recruited men with knowledge of the languages and cultures of the Far East, and skills in logistics, military science and tactics, engineering,

communications, medicine, photography, explosives, parachuting, and flying aircraft (Ward, 1991, p. 15). One of the early realizations the US forces had was “a white American, even with the cleverest of make-up, would be sure to attract attention” (Peers & Breilis, 1963, p. 59). The US forces worked closely with the British and the refugees drawn from camps to train natives who could then be re-introduced undetected and provide intelligence, communications, and sabotage activities in support of Detachment 101’s efforts. The idea, while novel in its approach, unfortunately failed. It did, however, set precedence for follow-on Detachment 101 activities involving natives.

The even though few Detachment 101 personnel spoke the Burmese languages they still managed to work very closely with the native Kachin hill tribesmen. US personnel learned to fight and survive in the jungles while they coordinated training and arming and deployment of the Kachins. By the end of 1943, Detachment 101 had six intelligence bases and during 1944 and early 1945, guerilla forces expanded to 10,800.

Detachment 101 was fortunate. Its members had more than a year to build an intelligence base before they were required to conduct guerilla warfare. That was a tremendous advantage, because with this intelligence base they always knew more about the enemy than the enemy did about them.

(Ward, 1991, p. 18)

Detachment 101 also had the advantage that the people living in the areas they first had to infiltrate were the Kachins, a people whose loyalties had already been established through American and Irish missionary work. Detachment 101 also used the Kachins to their full combat potential by assigning them duties they were trained and outfitted to accomplish: guerilla tactics in a jungle environment.

Detachment 101 was able to accomplish a difficult task through the use of culturally immersed and regionally adept personnel.

They provided 75 percent of all the intelligence from which the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force chose its targets and 85 percent of all the intelligence received by Stillwell’s Northern Combat Area Command. Detachment 101 infiltrated 162 native agent/radio teams into Burma by air, sea, and land. The guerilla forces and sabotage teams killed 5,428 Japanese Army members, wounded an estimated 10,000 more, captured 78 Japanese prisoners, demolished 57 bridges, derailed nine trains, destroyed or captured 272 vehicles, and destroyed 15,000 tons of Japanese supplies.

(Ward, 1991, pp. 19-20)

In this regard, there is one key point to be made about the importance of knowing the people you are working with, as the British learned the hard way in Nagaland (north-east India). They elected to recruit Kukis tribesmen into their Assam Rifles, instead of other local Naga tribesmen. The British thought the Kukis were of better fighting stock than the Nagas. The British, however, had forgotten that the British government had put down a Kukis uprising in 1917, a fact the Kukis had not forgotten and because of which they went almost completely over to the Japanese side (Thompson, 2001, p. 386).

### **C. OSS AND MODERN DAY NSW**

NSW, specifically, can trace a connection to the OSS's Maritime Unit (MU) and its Operational Swimmer Groups (OSG). The MU was created in the summer of 1943. Its mission was "infiltration of agents and operatives by sea, the waterborne supply of resistance groups, execution of maritime sabotage, and the development of special equipment and devices to effectuate the foregoing" (O'Donnell, 2004, p. 124). With the creation of the OSG, missions expanded to include underwater sabotage, hydrographic reconnaissance for amphibious assaults, reconnaissance work, and a host of maritime special operations.

In addition to maritime-related missions, some of the units assigned to MU/OSS, specifically the MU/OSS Eighth Army Detachment, conducted demolition raids 100 miles behind enemy lines, infiltrated for special reconnaissance (SR) on enemy defenses, and worked with partisans to report on targets for artillery and bombing, as well as gathering intelligence. Besides the European Theater, the MU also worked as far east as Burma. These MUs were assigned to Detachment 101. The Detachment 101 MUs' jobs were coastal SR, delivery of agents, hydrographic reconnaissance of landing beaches, and underwater probes for minefields. The MUs were sent into countries that spoke Burmese or Japanese. But unlike some of their Detachment 101 land counterparts, the MUs were not proficient in language skills. One former operator mentioned that he and a teammate were conducting waterborne reconnaissance when they came across natives in an outrigger. Neither of them had the language or cultural immersion skills to communicate with them and viable intelligence that might have been otherwise gathered was lost given the language barrier (O'Donnell, 2004, p. 140).

#### **IV. WHAT CULTURAL IMMERSION MEANT FOR NSW DURING THE VIETNAM WAR**

*Just remember this: communist guerillas hide among the people. If you win the people over to your side, the communist guerillas have no place to hide, you can find them. Then as military men, [you can] fix them...finish them.*

COL. Edward G. Lansdale, US Army  
Devised Counterinsurgency Training for Vietnam  
(Sasser, 2002, p. 67, emphasis added)

##### **A. VIETNAM: A SYNOPSIS OF WHAT WAS TO BECOME THE WATERSHED FOR MODERN DAY NSW FORCES**

Many of the mission profiles of today's NSW forces draw their origins from the Vietnam-era SEALs, UDTs, and NSW Riverine Special Boat Units. Vietnam and the operating conditions it presented were challenging enough (such as those found in the mangrove-swamps of Rung Sat Special Zone), but to inject an enemy that could effectively blend equally well into the countryside or the urban centers presented even greater challenges to all US forces fighting in that country. President Kennedy expressed a concern about the US forces having to contend with such an elusive adversary. He directed that each of the US military services (Army, Air Force, and Navy) develop organic forces capable of dealing with the guerilla-insurgent-subversive threat.

Responding to President Kennedy's desire for the Services to develop an Unconventional Warfare (UW) capability, the U.S. Navy established SEAL Teams ONE and TWO in January of 1962. Formed entirely with personnel from Underwater Demolition Teams, the SEALs mission was to conduct counterguerilla warfare and clandestine operations in maritime and riverine environments.

SEAL involvement in Vietnam began immediately and was advisory in nature. SEAL advisors instructed the Vietnamese in clandestine maritime operations. SEALs also began a UDT-style training course for the Biet Hai Commandos, the Junk Force Commando platoons, in Danang.

In February 1966, a small SEAL Team ONE detachment arrived in Vietnam to conduct direct-action missions. Operating out of Nha Be, in the Rung Sat Special Zone, this detachment signaled the beginning of a SEAL presence that would eventually include 8 SEAL platoons in country on a continuing basis. Additionally, SEALs served as advisors for

Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU) and the Lien Doc Ngoi Nhia, or LDNN, the Vietnamese SEALs. The last SEAL platoon departed Vietnam on 7 December 1971. The last SEAL advisor left Vietnam in March 1973.

The UDTs again saw combat in Vietnam while supporting the Amphibious Ready Groups. When attached to the riverine groups the UDTs conducted operations with river patrol boats and, in many cases, patrolled into the hinterland as well as along the riverbanks and beaches in order to destroy obstacles and bunkers. Additionally, UDT personnel acted as advisors.

(Commander United States Naval Special Warfare Command, no date)

There were a number of valuable lessons learned from these NSW pioneers who conducted special operations during the war in Vietnam. These lessons included the importance of developing and utilizing proven standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the *value added by working with culturally immersed and networked personnel* in the regions in which the NSW units had to function and operate. In some cases the NSW operators immersed themselves, in a limited fashion, within the local cultures.

#### **B. NWIP 29-1: THE MISSION OF THE “SEAL TEAMS IN NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE” IN VIETNAM**

The missions of the SEALs in Vietnam were laid out as follows:

1. To develop a specialized capability for sabotage, demolition, and other clandestine activities conducted in and from restricted waters, rivers, and canals. Specially to be able to destroy enemy shipping, harbor facilities, bridges, railway lines, and other installations in maritime areas and riverine environments. Also to protect friendly supply lines, installations, and assets in maritime and riverine environments from similar attack.
2. To infiltrate and/or exfiltrate agents, guerillas, evaders, and escapees.
3. To conduct reconnaissance, surveillance, and other intelligence-gathering activities.
4. To accomplish limited counterinsurgency civic action tasks that are normally incidental to counterguerilla operations. Possibilities include medical aid...
5. To organize, train, assist, and advise the United States, Allied, and other friendly military or paramilitary forces in the conduct of any of the above tasks.

6. To develop doctrine and tactics for such operations.
7. To develop support equipment, including special craft.

(Dockery, 1991, p. 106)

For the NSW forces assigned to these missions it seemed a daunting task. How to identify threats and gather intelligence in an unfamiliar battlespace? How to conduct missions not previously conducted by these newly formed units? Who were the reliable indigenous forces (if any) that the NSW units could count on for assistance in intelligence gathering and subsequent execution of these missions?

### **C. NSW FRIENDS AND ALLIES FROM UNUSUAL RESOURCES**

Both North and South Vietnam were divided into provinces, administrative units that served much the same role as states do in the US. These provinces were not large—about the actual size of counties in the US—but they each had their own localized government that reported to the national government in Saigon.

For military purposes, the forty-four provinces of South Vietnam were divided into four military regions or corps. Farthest north was I Corps...The center of South Vietnam held II Corps, covering the largest land area. III Corps included the Rung Sat Special Zone (RSSZ) as part of its area as well as Saigon. And the south, the Mekong Delta (the “Delta”) made up the IV Corps.

(Dockery, 2002, p. 209)

The first step in NSW success was getting to know who the players were in these four Vietnam regions that constituted the battlespace. To accomplish this task they were assigned to work with a variety of Vietnamese and Vietnamese-composite units. Some of the most effective units were the LDNN, PRU, and Hoi Chanhs through the Chieu Hoi Program. These local units were networked from the smallest hamlet to the larger village to the district to the key points throughout given provinces.

**Lien Doc Ngoui Nhai (LDNN)** is Vietnamese for “soldiers who fight under the sea.” They were established by the South Vietnamese government in July, 1961 (Dockery, 1991, p. 101). The South wanted to establish units with capabilities similar to those of the US UDTs. There were some initial reservations from the US. When the US finally authorized US instructor cadres to train the LDNN, the decision was made to train

them not as UDTs but instead as SEALs. The reasoning behind this decision was SEALs were more versed in the ways of guerilla tactics.

One SEAL, after working with LDNN trainees, observed “like most Asians, Vietnamese are accommodating people eager to please...” (Boehm & Sasser, 1997, p. 236). He took advantage of this character trait and motivated his LDNN to train hard with positive results. Most of the SEAL advisers, in the various case studies, pointed out that the LDNN were enthusiastic fighters who provided the much needed linguistic support the NSW forces needed to interact with local populations. They also had a better perspective, than any US adviser could obtain, regarding the general lay of the land and enemy situation. They also provided on-scene translation skills to SEALs in reconnaissance lay-up points. “While some South Vietnamese units had a poor reputation, this was not the case with the effective LDNNs” (Jordan, 2003, p. 106). The SEALs liked working with the LDNN and developed solid bonds of friendship and trust with these Vietnamese commandos.

In one account, Kevin Dockery cites a SEAL who commented, “the LDNN were very good fighters in my opinion” (2002, p. 58).

In the course of a mission, a fire fight with VC (Viet Cong) erupted, and the LDNN patrol leader named Tich [working with this former SEAL and a LDNN adviser] was shot and killed. The SEAL continued the discussion describing the fact that he was friends with Tich and had even attended Tich’s wedding. Now he had ‘to carry Tich’s body back to his people for the funeral.’

(Dockery, 2002, p. 60)

SEALs have a mutual agreement that if a fellow SEAL goes down in the field, wounded or killed, he will be returned home regardless of the risks. The SEAL above provided this same courtesy to his foreign counterpart, thereby treating him as an equal and demonstrating the close relationships developed between these units.

**Provisional Reconnaissance Units (PRU).** The PRU were direct action units developed to support counterguerilla activities and eventually the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) **Phoenix Program** (established in July 1967).



The forerunner of the Phoenix, known as Phung Hoang among the Vietnamese, was the Intelligence Collection and Exploitation Program (ICEX), developed by the CIA in the mid-1960's with the aim of putting the Viet Cong political organization under pressure. By the time ICEX evolved into. . . Phoenix, it was neutralizing 800 VCI every month through VCI defection, prisoner snatches, and ambushes.

(Sasser, 2002, p. 190, emphasis added)

The Phoenix program was an effort to collect intelligence and interdict key VC Infrastructure (VCI) and National Liberation Front (NLF) members. Some of the key VCI included VC administrators, couriers, coordinators, tax collectors, planners, and politicians (Constance & Fuerst, 1997, p. 250).

Contrary to the popular impression, the PRUs did not specialize in covert assassination, though they did target specific VC leaders for abduction and capture. By detaining and questioning the captives, the US advisers and other intelligence collection resources were able to obtain information leading to further VCI interception. There were occasions that if the PRU could not net their targets, they often killed them in open combat.

(Bosiljevac, 1990, p. 70)

The SEALs coined two phrases relating to this subject: "Anyone can just go in there and kill someone...[but] *you can't get information from a corpse*" (Dockery, 1991, p. 160, emphasis added).

US SEALs were utilized extensively as "advisers" to the PRU. The PRU drew its members from multiple sources. The majority were Vietnamese; there were also a large number of Humong (montagnards) from the mountains, Cambodians from across the border, some Chinese, and even deserters from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The ARVN deserters were drawn by the higher pay offered by the PRUs as well as the chance to defend their home areas (Dockery, 1991, p. 209). Some of the "indigenous PRUs were a hardened lot of warriors; many were criminals who chose to fight for the South rather than waste away in a Vietnamese jail" (Bosiljevac, 1990, p. 70).

Each province in the delta had its own PRU, and with the exception of the one in Chau Doc, they were advised by SEALs. Most SEAL platoon commanders worked closely with PRUs in their operation areas...

[The PRUs also contained former VC.]

...who had decided life was better on the other side. They knew what was happening in their area, and they always had more information than they could act on, so we [referring to SEALs] often did operations they couldn't.

(Gormly, 1999, p. 122)

The Phoenix/ICEX programs provided a logical processing structure for the field intelligence that was coming in, as well as allowing the military to take advantage of the supply of informants through the Chieu Hoi Program. The intelligence gathered by the SEALs and PRUs was collated and analyzed by a joint Vietnamese/US team at each province headquarters before it was sent to higher commands. "Each province had a Province Intelligence Operations Coordination Center (PIOCC) that reported its findings to the District Intelligence Operations Coordination Center (DIOCC) that reported its findings to Saigon" (Dockery, 1991, p. 209).

**Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program and Hoi Chanhs.** The Chieu Hoi program was another force provider for the Phoenix Program. In the case of the Chieu Hoi program North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and VC deserters (many of whom were ranking members of the VCI) were given amnesty if they "chieu hoied" or agreed to work for the South. They were paid bounties for major information and weapons turned in. From then on they were referred to as Hoi Chanhs and inducted into the PRU as well. The Hoi Chanhs functioned as guides to cache sites, point men, VCI interceptors, and jungle fighters. They also provided information about things such as enemy troop movements and leadership meetings. Their efforts, when combined with NSW and PRU forces, resulted in some outstanding intelligence resources straight from the VCI as well as a ready trained fighting force.

Local VC would be returned to their homes and families. The program was amazingly successful during the ten years of its existence from 1963 to 1973, and almost 160,000 VC and NVA took advantage of it, according to US records.

(Dockery, 2002, p. 209)

The SEAL advisers to the PRU and Hoi Chanhs trained and developed close working relationships and bonds of exceptional trust with both groups just as they did

with the LDNN. They lived amongst them and spent time getting to know things about them. They would “watch each other’s back” so to speak. There are several cases discussed by Vietnam SEALs where the level of trust and mutual respect was high.

One SEAL, for instance, quoted by Walton and Dockery had this to say:

Keeping the PRU’s trust was important to me...they always knew I would back them up. I ate with the PRUs down in the little restaurant in Nha Be. The men knew I would work with them, eat with them, and never abandon them...my PRUs knew that I would always back them, and that trust helped make for a very effective unit.

If you were going to get your men’s respect, you had to live, eat, sleep, and fight right alongside them...To be a good adviser, you had to become one of the men you were leading, at least in spirit. Those PRUs would do things for us that other advisers just wouldn’t believe.

(Watson & Dockery, 1993, pp. 215-216)

From another SEAL:

I had a PRU whom I entrusted my life with. His name was Bia’ (Ba-A), and I quickly promoted him to PRU chief. Bia’ had been a VC company commander, and his skills and abilities were superb. Our team developed a close camaraderie and dependency on one another.

One of the ways I protected my men involved health care. I saw to it my wounded PRUs were admitted into American, and not Vietnamese, hospitals. Again, corruption was rampant...it was a ‘crapshoot’ as to whether someone would live or not if they had even a moderate wound. When they recovered I personally returned to the American Hospital to pick them up... Had they been sent to a local hospital...who knows.

It was important to me to personally meet with the relatives of my wounded PRUs. Unfortunately, the only person bringing food into their homes were the men who’d just been shot. ‘Please tell them not to worry about their husbands; they’ll be alright,’ I instructed my interpreter. ‘Tell them they’re being well taken care of at the American hospital, and will be home soon. Also,’ I said as I reached out with an envelope, ‘tell them here is their husband’s money. This should take care of them for the time being.’

Overjoyed, the women thanked me profusely. Before long, the wounded PRUs were back. Because I treated my men like they were ‘number one,’ they devoted themselves to me. Their loyalty was beyond question.

(Constance & Fuerst, 1997, pp. 259-260)

This latter SEAL learned that the Vietnamese do not understand US sarcasm. When he complained, in jest, to one of his ex-VC security guards that his gun wasn't properly cleaned, the guard took such offense (at the perceived disgrace) that he told the SEAL if the gun was not up to par then to shoot him with the "less than perfect weapon;" the SEAL declined the invitation (Constance & Fuerst, 1997, p. 257).

In an interview, Mr. Donald Crawford (Vietnam Veteran SEAL and former historian for the Naval Special Warfare Command) stated that some of the most valuable information came from the Hoi Chanh and other local informants provided through the Chieu Hoi Processing Centers. Mr. Crawford went on to describe the value of simple acts such as having tea, eating a meal, or just socializing with local populations and how these could yield windfall results. Gestures of medical and other forms of aid also helped to enhance NSW operators' standings in the local communities. In some cases, helping a local family would result in a "one-on-one" contract being established. Simply put, *trust* was developed between the NSW operator and his LDNN translator with those they just provided aid to. Translators were essential, for most SEALs, to break down language barriers. Attempting to learn the local cultures and customs also helped. It demonstrated the NSW member's resolve to help the local hamlet or village.

According to Mr. Crawford, with this social interaction (*social networking*) local routines could be established. NSW operators armed with the knowledge of how the local population functioned provided insights or actionable intelligence on VC movements and activities that were occurring in the local provinces. Sometimes the intelligence was so reliable actions were taken immediately. He stated "we would go down to the local Chieu Hoi Processing Center asking about suspect VC, and informants at the center would state they had just seen the VC in question and we would go to the location the informants gave us and roll up the guy we were looking for." On other occasions, Mr. Crawford and the NSW units he was assigned to would receive information on weapons or medical supply cache sites and uncover those.

Mr. Crawford confirmed that the LDNN and local PRU were instrumental in getting into local information nets. Between the LDNN, PRU, and Hoi Chanh the intelligence was much more detailed and actionable from these sources than "dated"

intelligence provided by some of the Navy Intel Liaison Officers (NILOs) Mr. Crawford had previously contended with. He stressed how crucial solid turnover and introductions were to local information sources, particularly between outbound SEALs/PRU advisors and their inbound adviser reliefs in order to maintain effective information flows. **Mutual Trust**, not only with the indigenous military forces but with the local populations, was above all else the vital key to success for all the intelligence networks and subsequent NSW missions

**Biet Hai.** Besides organic riverine boat assets, NSW operators and their PRU and LDNN forces also worked with a wooden-hulled indigenous Vietnamese junk force, the Biet Hai, for mobility in and around the numerous waterways. The Biet Hai also provided intelligence. The Biet Hai were a “ragtag bunch of river pirates, mostly former VC, that no one wanted or trusted” that with effort “had been turned into a formable band of cutthroats whose exploits...caught the attention of both friend and foe in the Delta” (Mekong Delta) (Boehm & Sasser, 1997, p. 235).

One SEAL recounted a religious cultural experience that involved a new location for a junk base. It involved breaking ground for a new base, Junk Base 33, after the previous base had been overrun.

The chosen site was a malaria-looking mud and sand beach backed by old clearings and trails through the jungle. Nearby was an ancient cemetery where vines crept around molded and cracked tombstones and crawled up the giant face of a neglected stone Buddha with its nose broken off.

(Boehm & Sasser, 1997, p. 26)

The Vietnamese forces were upset with the new location and seemed to panic at the sight of the cemetery. After a few days most of the Vietnamese force abandoned the new site and moved on. A few days later a friendly Buddhist monk explained the situation to the SEAL and others in charge of the new installation:

Most Vietnamese people as well as the mountain people believe in the religion of animism. They believe in ghosts and spirits of the dead. They are most afraid of the spirits called Pratas. The cemetery in question is the kind of burial grounds where Pratas rise. Pratas are unattended and uncared-for spirits who have died violently through accident or war or who, in the case of women, have died without fulfilling their mission of bearing children. They are angry, greedy, deceptive, and unpredictable

spirits-just like mankind. They are hostile to individuals, to families, and to communities. That is why the people fled.

(Boehm & Sasser, 1997, p. 27, emphasis added)

Knowledge about these religious beliefs and the Vietnamese concerns about spirits would be used over and over again to the SEALs' advantage with stories generated by the VC and perpetuated by the SEALs about the "men with green faces." The SEALs, in comparative size to the average VC or any Vietnamese for that matter, were considerably larger. When they conducted their raids and ambushes, they would strike hard and fast, and would wear camouflage face paint to conceal their faces. To the VC, it appeared as though these large "devils or evil spirits" with green faces were rising up out of the jungle and taking people away to parts unknown. This had a significant effect on the morale of the VCI.

**Father Hoa (Wa) and his network.** In war there are a certain number of fortuitous meetings or pairings that occur. In Vietnam this was the case with the SEALs, their LDNN and PRUs, and a Chinese Catholic priest named Father Hoa. Father Hoa is a legend among the SEALs who fought in Vietnam. He left China with Chiang Kai-shek, and unlike Chiang, who went to Taiwan, Father Hoa went to Vietnam, where he was given jurisdiction over the village of Hai Yen, in Ca Mau. The Father, a staunch anti-communist, initiated many improvements to build up the town over the years and taught the locals to resist communism. He is credited for actually killing VC infiltrators (Sasser, 2002, p. 93).

During the Vietnam War Hai Yen became a secure hamlet from which the SEALs could operate.

The Father had also formed his own small army of indigenous fighters, who operated virtually independent of government control. Father Hoa had a greater knowledge of unconventional warfare in Southeast Asia than any military unit in Vietnam. He had also established an extensive intelligence network, all of which he willingly shared with the SEALs...

Most of Father Hoa's fighters were ex-Viet Cong or former soldiers of the North Vietnamese army (NVA) whom the priest had converted from communist to fighters of communism. No VC who came to Hai Yen with weapons slung would be accosted. He was given a meal, extra rations, medical attention if needed, and occasionally a little money.

(Father Hoa's rule.) Then Father Hoa would take the man aside. 'If you come back again,' he advised, 'it is obvious that the people you work for cannot pay or take care of you. If you return, then you work for me. The job is here if you want to stay now, or come back later. If you come back again, there is no choice—you will work for me.'

(Sasser, 2002, p. 93)

Father Hoa's forces were never in short supply of weapons or ammunition. It was suspected that Father Hoa's arms, received through "unofficial channels," might have come directly from VC arms caches (Watson & Dockery, 1993, p. 250). The father was exceptionally well connected. Superb point men and agents were supplied to the SEALs by Father Hoa. One SEAL recounted that Father Hoa had convinced a former NVA company commander to work with the SEALs:

One of the men he gave to lead us in on any op...had obviously been at war most of his life...his deliberate movements showed that he had lived in a hostile environment for some time...The man ended up being one hell of a point man. He scouted for us a number of times and led us through some bad areas. He knew all the signs of booby traps, caches, and safe trails. He should have—he'd been an NVA company commander before joining Father Hoa's group!

(Watson & Dockery, 1993, pp. 261-262)

There were instances where the intelligence (or its source) was not reliable or trustworthy. On one occasion an enemy agent was used in an attempt to set up a SEAL Platoon during a mission. Through sound situational awareness (SA) the SEALs were able to ascertain that the target was questionable. The mission was scrubbed and the SEALs returned to their base of operations. The SEAL, recalling the situation, suggested that when the agent was discovered that Father Hoa's people took care of the agent permanently.

There were other unrelated SEAL stories about Hoi Chanh on occasion still being loyal to the North and attempting to assassinate fellow Hoi Chanh working with the SEALs. "...the number two Hoi Chanh eventually confessed, with physical encouragement ..., that he had been assigned to assassinate Delta Platoon's now 'Number One' trustworthy Hoi Chanh guide."

(Smith & Maki, 1994, p. 297)

The SEALs operating with Father Hoa's irregulars were credited as being the some of the most effective combat units operating in Vietnam. Father Hoa was also credited with "knowing more about UW than the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, or the Special Forces, even the SEALs ever thought of knowing; and he built up all of this himself..."(Watson & Dockery, 1997, p. 273).

**Viet Cong.** There are other cases where ex-VC and ex-NVA (or Hoi Chanh), were used as personal body guards. Active VC were even utilized or contacted on occasion to develop a better understanding of the situation in Vietnam. In one instance, an acting SEAL Team commander actually became friends with a local VC commander.

On weekends he (the SEAL acting Team commander) would visit villages in the area east of Saigon and treat those who were ill. In the process he met a man named Minh...who turned out to be the commander of the local Viet Cong battalion. The two became friends.

Minh drove a cab in Saigon when he wasn't engaged in combat...The SEAL would climb into his cab and they headed for Cholon, the Chinese section of Saigon where few Americans ventured. They managed to converse in a mixture of French, English, and Vietnamese.

'We'd talk. We'd eat. I respected him more than some of the people I was working with...I learned a lot about their thinking and learned to respect them, to admire them...'

(Kelly, 1993, p. 130)

It was not uncommon to have previously captured VC working for SEALs. Those captured on day one, might be carrying a radio day two, and by day three they might be walking point with a weapon in hand (Kelly, 1993, p. 153). By living, training, and interacting daily with each of these irregular units, NSW (SEAL) SA increased significantly, and reliable information networks were developed. The SEALs were rewarded in turn with a near continuous flow of intelligence that led to numerous leadership interdictions, arms caches captured, and other NSW related missions.

#### **D. ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE: WHAT DID IT MEAN FOR THE NSW OPERATING IN VIETNAM?**

The VC were fighting a classic guerilla war against the ARVN. The VCI were employing the "strategy of guerilla warfare that concerns not what the guerilla does but



how he is able to do it and, at the same time, began to legitimate the revolutionary party and prepare the population for accepting its ‘goal culture’” (Johnson, 1982, pp. 146-147).

The need to better organize the intelligence efforts for attacking the VCI was recognized as early as 1961. Sir Robert Thompson, serving with the British embassy in Saigon, South Vietnam, declared that the VCI should be the primary target of any counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam (Sasser, 2002, p. 190).

Initial SEAL operations were poor and ineffective. The SEALs would go out into the jungles at night for up to 48 hours and accomplish nothing. According to Orr Kelly (1993), “They had a lack of accurate, timely intelligence...in the early part of their involvement in the war, they had been forced to rely on intelligence gathered by others...often it was almost embarrassingly bad” (p. 151). One SEAL recalls:

We would often stumble, try to collide with a contact target, have a fire fight, try to kill a bunch of people, and then get out well before dawn. We were without any Seeing Eye Dog at all. We didn’t know what sounds were. We didn’t know which parts of hamlets were trouble...The idea of working with knowledgeable, relatively well-trained counterguerilla-type personnel was of tremendous benefit to us.

(Kelly, 1993, p. 161)

After some of these failings the US took active steps to follow Sir Robert’s declaration. The pairings of the US SEALs and the afore-mentioned Vietnamese units are evidence of this. The SEALs were provided with intelligence when available from the CIA and other government sources such as the NILOs, but it was their ability to establish their networks at the local level or enhance pre-existing networks that was their real strength.

The SEALs, well armed with a ready supply of intelligence, could utilize their war fighting assets to include their own advanced land warfare and waterborne skills (small arms, medical, communications, demolitions, hand-to-hand combat, navigation, small boat, swimming, diving, air operations, some language, etc.). SEALs were thus able to capitalize on intelligence rapidly (almost immediately) and effectively. NSW SOPs allowed the SEALs to achieve repeat performances.

Because of our technique of operating, the ferocity of how we did our job, and the tactics we used, we were very much like the VC themselves, only better. We were much more aggressive. Since we had learned just how the VC were successful, and saw that it worked, we copied it. The action resulted in extremely high kill ratios of VC to SEALs lost during the war—in our favor.

(Dockery, 2002, p. 189)

The SEALs are credited with “being one of the only US units in Vietnam with the ability to gather their own intelligence, conduct a combat operation based on that intelligence, and then analyze the results, all with the blessing from those in higher authority” (Dockery, 1991, p.216). In many cases the intelligence from the targets or gleaned from en route portions of the mission resulted in follow-on missions being generated. The SEALs, with proper intelligence, could operate better, faster, and more safely.

One SEAL notes:

From about the middle to the end of my tour, we started trying to run operations off of the intelligence net we developed. This was information we received either from people we had captured or from intelligence structures that existed in the delta, on both the US Navy’s and South Vietnamese sides. So we switched from just going out and doing ambushing to actually trying to target specific Viet Cong leaders in their home, hamlets, villages, or whatever.

Operating from our own **‘self-intelligence’** was kind of a unique situation for us as the first SEALs to operate in the Mekong Delta. In fact, we were the only US forces actually doing ops on the ground in the delta area for a while...Every time we went out on an operation, we gathered further intelligence for ourselves as well as for others.

(Dockery, 2002, p. 98, emphasis added)

The SEALs would pass on critical information to larger forces such as the Army and the Navy, but they were cautious in passing too much information out of concern for possible compromise by faulty information security systems in the US/Vietnamese intelligence centers.

Frequently, we had intelligence critical to the success of another op we were set to go on, so we kept it to ourselves. It was like finding gold. We didn’t want to lose our strategy to the press. If we let it go to NILO, sooner rather than later our information invariably hit the streets. Once it

was of no further value to us, we let it go. Initially, we tried passing on information early, and it nearly got us killed in an ambush.

(Constance & Fuerst, 1997, p. 258)

It was reported that the VCI in some 16 provinces of IV Corps ceased to function as an entity due to continuous pressure exerted by the SEALs and their PRUs applied (Dockery, 2002, p. 210). VC tax collectors were a particularly rich target for the SEALs, LDNN, and their PRUs. They represented higher level leadership in the VCI. Their role was to force villagers to pay money or goods as VC-levied taxes. Tax collectors had to know a lot about the province they operated in to do their job. SEALs considered this a good snatch and grab operation.

“Since he was high up in the infrastructure, we could get good information from him; and that was our basic objective, eliminating the VCI and gathering information on the higher-ups and their operations...thus choke off a source of supply for the VC”( Dockery, 2002, p. 216). If other vital information was obtained, such as about large troop movements at specific times that information was passed onto the Army or Navy for action.

For the SEALs who worked with Father Hoa, the intelligence provided was top-notch. The SEALs working at the tip of Ca Mau Peninsula amazed their superiors with continuous flows of high-ranking VC captives.

Sometimes their intelligence was so good that they would wait at the side of a canal, knowing that a sampan carrying VC leaders would come along at a certain time. ‘The people we were looking for came down the canal at the time they were supposed to. They were this close. Just reach out and grab’em. It was that easy a few times.’

(Kelly, 1993, p. 152)

There were other intelligence coups that happened not by chance but by design. Some VCI personalities were just trying to survive the war and keep their families alive. In one case a SEAL was approached by an informant source he had developed. The source put him in contact with a high-ranking VC who provided a lay-down of attacks planned against key targets and other information.

As it turns out, the man, simply known as ‘Mister,’ was actually the number one man, in charge of all VC operations in the delta. The SEAL

was out in the field on one occasion Mister pushed him into a hole and concealed him from a passing VC patrol. Mister saved the SEALs life. This act and the information provided by Mister were done out of fear for his life and the life of his wife suffering from tuberculosis and a sick child. Mister had hoped to sell information for money to care for his family. After the defeat at Tet the VC were left to fend for themselves. Food, medicine, and other survival necessities were no longer made available. Mister was one of those left behind.

(Kelly, 1993, pp. 154-155)

The SEALs, PRUs, LDNN, and Hoi Chanhs all worked closely. They trusted each other on numerous occasions, to include the relatively unsuccessful “Bright Light” prisoner of war (POW) rescue operations and more successful combat search and rescue (CSAR) missions, such as the one for downed electronic warfare officer Lt. Col Iceal Hambleton in April 1972.

By April, most of the US ground troops had been withdrawn and the US was using heavy air power to pound the NVA in support of ARVN operations. During these operations the aircraft Hambleton was in was shot down over the Quang Tri Province. The Lt Col had a wealth of knowledge in his head about US missile forces and their targets. To the VC he was a prize and bait for US rescue forces. After several failed rescue attempts, resulting in more US servicemen killed in action (KIA) and with time running out, a mission plan was drawn up to rescue the downed airman. A SEAL, named Tom Norris, and a LDNN, named Nguyen Van Kiet, dressed as local fishermen, paddled up the Song Mieu Giang River, at extreme risk of capture or death, to retrieve Hambleton. The mission was successful and all three men made it back alive. For their bravery, Norris was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (one of three CMHs ever awarded to a SEAL) and Kiet was awarded the US Navy Cross (the only one ever given to a Vietnamese).

#### **Summary Results of SEAL Combat Actions in Vietnam 1966-1971:**

Enemy killed in action (KIA confirmed by body count)	1,594
Enemy killed in action (KIA probable, body not found)	638
Enemy captured	1,080
Enemy weapons captured	over 485
Enemy documents captured (intelligence)	over 277.5 kg
Ratio SEAL to Enemy losses (KIA)	1 SEAL per 50 Enemy

(Dockery, 1991, p. 215)

The Vietnamese irregulars and paramilitary units knew the language, the people, and the land. The SEALs, through the various agencies they reported to, were able to provide considerable financial support as well contribute the technology of modern warfare: helicopters, combat riverine and sea craft, good communications, and a sophisticated logistics system. By getting out into the field and local population centers, the SEALs were able to gain firsthand knowledge of the battlespace in which they were required to operate. These incursions also allowed the SEALs to hone their SOPs which for many of them became literally second nature.

The SEALs did not totally immerse themselves in the local cultures but they did realize the tremendous value added by using culturally immersed personnel (Vietnamese units and individuals previously discussed). The SEALs used what immersion skills they did have to establish the levels of trust to operate with and gather information through these personnel. These immersed Vietnamese personnel were extremely well connected throughout the various provinces and provided the *insider perspective* required and requisite language skills to conduct the NSW missions the SEALs were sent to Vietnam to accomplish.

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## V. CULTURAL IMMERSION

### A. WHAT IS CULTURAL IMMERSION?

*Cultural immersion* refers to a broad-based combination of education, training, and practical skills and experiences that allows its practitioner to adapt and/or become immersed in a particular group or society on some level. Cultural immersion entails an understanding of integrated patterns of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts; the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of an ethnic, religious, or social group. The fundamental objectives of cultural immersion are first, to develop a situational awareness (SA) in a given region, and second, to develop a *network of trust* among the local people (native, naturalized, or transient) within the region of interest.

### B. WHAT ARE THE TENETS OF CULTURAL IMMERSION?

Levels of cultural immersion can be broken down into the following five levels: *peripheral, primary, intermediate, advanced, and indigenous or native*. Each level depends on the proficiency of culturally immersed personnel to accomplish their given tasks or job assignments utilizing their knowledge/experience, which in turn depends on knowledge of local language(s), ideologies/religions, social interactions, politics/leadership, daily routines/rituals, economics, values/ethics, and region-specific adaptations.

**Language** is the first step in cultural immersion. It is one of the means by which people can identify others. Without the means to communicate, cultural immersion is severely limited if not virtually impossible. Language represents the ability to obtain or attain basic survival needs. For the purpose of cultural immersion discussions, *language* is not just the ability to read, write, and speak. *Language* includes the ability to understand the idiosyncrasies and subtleties of those using it.

**Ideology/Religion** is another way to distinguish a particular group from others in a given region. They both are powerful motivators to direct groups or individuals to act in certain ways or to carry out certain actions such as those demonstrated on September 11, 2001. Understanding the beliefs of a group or individual is critical for understanding

why the members might be motivated to act the way they do and for identifying possible solutions for how best to redirect their energies.

**The sum total of social interactions** indicates how a society is networked. Social interactions establish the *internal* and *external* relationships a society must contend with to survive. Internal relationships can include but are not limited: to families, tribes, clans, professional affiliations, local social organizations, etc. In contrast, as external relations can include relations with other states, allies, enemies, competing countries, trading partners (import and export), etc. Internal relations can also be broken down into four specific types which reflect different roles: 1) *directly supportive* (family members or teammates), 2) *indirectly supportive* (service providers), 3) *directly adversarial* (feud relationships), or 4) *indirectly adversarial* (business competitors). External relations follow suit with 1) *directly supportive* (allies), 2) *indirectly supportive* (import/export trade partners), 3) *directly adversarial* (anti-western terrorists or rogue states), or 4) *indirectly adversarial* (state sponsors of terrorism) roles.

**Leaders**, along with the **political structure**, set the precedents for others to follow. They provide the direction and laws, including enforcement. They focus a society's efforts and resources. They can strongly influence social interactions, in addition to defining the roles of these relationships.

**Daily Routines/Rituals** can set the stage for how the aforementioned cultural tenets all come together and inter-relate. Routines and rituals establish the patterns of behavior. They are the means by which, one may explain how and why people interact the way they do. The variety of routines and rituals is extensive. They can range from an individual going to and from work to mass religious gatherings with all the formalities and trappings.

**Economics** plays a major role in how countries and, on a smaller scale, societies interact with one another. Economics can be a driving force for a country's politicians, and can lead them to adopt supportive or adversarial roles both internally and/or externally. A strong economy when properly managed represents power, stability, and survival for a country. A weak economy leads to the direct opposite.



**Values/Ethics** represent beliefs at a micro level vice the macro view that ideology/religion represents. Values/ethics are core considerations for an individual who will use them as the basis for decisions about whether and when decisions to act or take no action.

**Regional Adaptations** refers to the ability of an individual or group to live within a particular geographic and climatologically challenging region. Such adaptations would include selection of clothing, shelter, and food as well as production, transportation, and communications. Regions can be urban, suburban, rural, or primitive.

### C. **WHAT ARE THE LEVELS OF CULTURAL IMMERSION?**

The first level of cultural immersion is **peripheral immersion**. To attain this level requires some general education, perhaps a limited exposure to a region, some of the societies contained within it and their cultural aspects. Adaptation is difficult at this level. Language proficiency is negligible and interpreters will most likely be required to interact with the local people.

The second level of cultural immersion is **primary immersion**. This demands/reflects more specific education (historical, political, and religious) regarding a specific region of the world; several introductory trips to and around a given region, and interaction with local populations at a tourist level. Language proficiency may be equivalent to a secondary/high school level and individuals are likely to require interpreter/translator assistance.

The third level of cultural immersion is **intermediate immersion**. This requires specialized education, about a particular region to include its politics, economics, culture(s), religion(s), and language(s). Intermediate immersion entails considerable travel within a particular region to include staying with locals and observing (perhaps participating in) some local customs. Language proficiency is high—equivalent to that received in college or advanced language schools. No assistance is required to function in the given region. Individuals at this level can fit themselves into social networks.

The fourth level of cultural immersion is **advanced immersion**. In addition to the specialized education needed for intermediate immersion, advanced immersion concentrates more on the social sciences; to include psychology, sociology,

anthropology, and philosophy of the region of interest. Advanced immersion also includes living in a region for extended periods of time and functioning as part of a given society. Advanced immersion skills include having a detailed appreciation for local customs, beliefs, mannerisms and thought processes. At this level, practitioners participate in social networks that they can call upon to accomplish tasks.

The fifth level of cultural immersion is **indigenous or native immersion**. This is not something that can be taught or gained through experience. Indigenous or native immersion refers to those persons born to native parents and raised in a region of interest. They, quite literally, are completely immersed. They are natives and know the lay of the land. Though some may lack higher levels of formal education, they speak the local dialect/language, they think the local thought processes and, in almost all cases, they function comfortably/effortlessly in the local society. These skills, coupled with their knowledge of the lay of the land, give them a natural ability to establish elementary to advanced social networks within their sphere of influence.

#### **D. CULTURAL IMMERSION: IN A MILITARY CONTEXT**

Cultural immersion skills allow the military practitioner to communicate with indigenous or foreign personnel, civilian or military. Cultural immersion skills are a means to an end. From a military perspective they should be utilized for two purposes: First to gather human intelligence (HUMINT) with the insider's perspective; Second, they can be used to help conduct more sophisticated, nuanced, and accurate mission planning and execution within a given battlespace or region. Furthermore, cultural immersion allows units with these capabilities to better accomplish mission essential coordination with other allied or indigenous paramilitary type forces. Mission essential coordination may include some or all of the following items: close air support (CAS), artillery fire support, terminal guidance operations (TGO), deconfliction (to avoid fratricide), other communications, and/or transportation. Cultural immersion can also provide a means to gain logistics support (weapons, ammunition, food, water, shelter, first aid, etc.).

Cultural immersion would also allow military practitioners to better understand and appreciate local Military/Warfare techniques. This speaks to immersion in a military

context. For instance it would mean gaining a historical understanding of conflicts throughout a region. It would also focus attention on local tactics, techniques, procedures, failures, and successes, as well as strategically significant sites, centers of gravity (COGs), critical transportation nodes, power supplies, food supplies, water supplies, and other potentially vital target information.

Taking into consideration the various cultural immersion tenets listed above, those forces utilizing immersion skills could overcome certain barriers that unprepared military forces cannot cross. The first step, language, is the most fundamental. It is the keystone for establishing some form of relationship with another person(s). The next step is establishing a professional/working relationship. There are several methods by which to achieve this, to include training, military exercises, co-planning, and actual military combat operations. As forces are able to observe each others' skill levels in the field the various levels of trust develop. The third step, then, is building social relationships, such as some of those discussed in previous chapters, which also allow a certain degree of trust to develop.

Cultural immersion capabilities do not have to entail a military unit becoming immersed to the advanced level. We see this if we re-consider the cases already discussed.

For instance COL Lawrence in Arabia utilized *advanced immersion* skills. Lawrence had all of the skill sets required to fulfill advanced cultural immersion to include a vast knowledge of the Arab culture, language(s) (including the various dialects), knowledge about their history, philosophy, social and military networks, and he was well traveled throughout that region of the world. Lawrence's only short coming was the fact that he could not physically blend in with the indigenous populations among whom he lived.

In the case of the OSS in Europe, immersion was conducted at all levels of immersion to include *indigenous or native immersion*. Those OSS units that were successful in utilizing their skills did so by virtue of the fact they had the same general appearance as the enemy forces or the neutrals caught up in the conflicts. In some cases, language barriers were easily overcome. In other cases, native born and raised German

expatriates were available and recruited for operations within Germany. These same Germans had not been displaced for very long from their country of origin. This is important, because forces trying to pass as indigenous forces or as locals may have difficulty in doing so if they have been out of the region and lost touch with how the local societies interact, how they communicate (with language idiosyncrasies), and what their daily routines are.

The OSS in Burma had an entirely different set of challenges to contend with. They did not look at all like the natives or transients in the regions where they operated. Few of the OSS forces actually spoke the native languages or Japanese. Few had any experience or requisite survival skills in the terrain in which they had to operate. To overcome these shortcomings, the American and British forces recruited and trained local Kachin tribesmen to work with them and assist in executing Allied missions. Irish missionaries would also allow the Allies to use the various missions' local networks. The Allied missions were quite successful by using this paired technique of *peripherally and primary immersed* operators working with *indigenous or native immersed* tribesmen. Due to the effectiveness of this technique it was used extensively by NSW personnel in the Vietnam War.

When the SEALs arrived in Vietnam they had the war fighting skills to execute their missions, but only *peripheral and primary immersion* skill levels when it came to interacting with the Vietnamese units and indigenous personnel with whom they operated. The local PRUs, LDNN, and Hoi Chanh provided the requisite *intermediate, advanced, indigenous or native immersion* skills to gather the HUMINT or other forms of information to accomplish the NSW missions in Vietnam. Just as with the OSS units in Burma, the SEALs would be introduced through their networks, to individuals, such as Father Hoa. Father Hoa, armed with *advanced immersion skills*, provided outstanding information, forces, and situational awareness which the SEALs, again, could capitalize on.

Cultural immersion is not the final ends to final means. Rather, it is a tool or skill set that allows missions to develop and to be executed with smooth transitions. It does not guarantee mission success but certainly assures greater mission success then

operating without it. Cultural immersion allows those who possess these skills—or the forces they have working for them who possess these skills—to have a distinct edge over an adversary who doesn’t have these assets. Cultural immersion also “evens up the playing field” when US or allied forces are operating in foreign lands against otherwise invisible or immersed enemies.

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## VI. A CULTURAL IMMERSION MODEL

### A. WHO IS DOING CULTURAL IMMERSION?

To the Army's credit, the value of cultural immersion training has long been recognized as a useful force capability/enhancement. Given the Army's mission to "hold and maintain territory" it makes sense that at least a portion of the Army's personnel are given some form of immersion skills to function with host nation forces and local populations in various regions of the globe. But it is no longer just the Army engaging in land warfare related operations.

With the Global War on Terrorism expanding, and special operations forces such as NSW conducting more combating terrorism (CBT), direct action (DA), and special reconnaissance (SR) missions in hostile, semi-permissive, and benign regions, cultural immersion skills are a must. The Army's Special Forces (SF), Civil Affairs (CA), and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Commands provide cultural immersion training and resources to their people, each with their own motivations for doing so. But which resource or warfare specialty has the focus on immersion skills to the fidelity that would allow NSW to get its forces trained to at least a primary or intermediate level of proficiency, and preferably the latter? If the intent is that NSW forces can better establish intelligence networks which, in turn, allow these NSW forces to track down and address the threats presented by terrorist organizations or insurgent movements in a direct and time sensitive manner, then it seems paramount to consider what NSW could learn—or borrow—from these other entities.

After several extensive discussions at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey, with Foreign Area Officers (FAO) and some preliminary research about the program, along with attendance of a 14 June 2004 Foreign Area Officer Course (FAOC) briefing, I have concluded that the FAO community's approach to training its personnel, to become **region experts**, is a solid model for consideration for NSW cultural immersion requirements.

## B. WHAT IS THE FOREIGN AREA OFFICER PROGRAM ABOUT?

Foreign Area Officers (FAO) are specially trained regional experts. They are utilized as experts in nine major regions of the world. They travel and become versed in the various countries found in each of these regions, which are:

- 48B - Latin America
- 48C – Europe
- 48D – South Asia
- 48E – Eurasia
- 48F – China
- 48G – Middle East / North Africa
- 48H – Northeast Asia
- 48I – Southeast Asia
- 48J – Sub-Saharan Africa

FAO training is well designed and systematic. The result is advanced firsthand practical experiences in a given region to include the development of contacts and potential networks. FAOs function at an *intermediate to advanced immersion level* and are used extensively by senior commanders and other government officials, typically at the strategic level, when extensive regional knowledge is required.

The objectives of the FAO program are that the qualified FAOs have the ability to effectively apply their foreign language training, in country training (ICT), and their advanced civil schooling (ACS) to: identify and understand US interests as they apply to countries within the region; improve language fluency; develop a detailed knowledge of the region; acquire a firsthand practical sense of the country and region; and begin the process of building contacts within the region that will provide the officer the means to serve effectively in key political-military positions.

Specific competency objectives or “domains of experience and knowledge” are divided into eleven areas. They are listed below with their definitions:

a. **Regional Experience.** PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE living and working in the region. Practical experience working with, observing, and experiencing the politics, economics, societies, cultures, geography, demography, etc. in the region.

b. **Language.** FAO should test on the DLPT at 3/3 and have a professional knowledge of military terminology by the end of ICT, if not beforehand.



c. **Military-to-Military Experience.** Practical experience working with regional military personnel on real-world projects, exercises, etc.

d. **Security Assistance Activities.** Practical experience and a working knowledge of Security Assistance programs such as Foreign Military Sales (FMS), International Military Education and Training (IMET), Humanitarian Assistance (HA), HA Excess Property (HA-EP), and Combined Operations & Exercises. Practical experience and a working knowledge of the Security Assistance Officer's (SAO) role in the development of the Theater Security Cooperation Plan, and his/her role in coordinating and de-conflicting it with the Embassy's Mission Program Plan.

e. **Defense Attaché Activities.** Practical experience and a working knowledge of the roles of the Defense Attaché: as a diplomat, the military advisor to the Ambassador; the representative of the Secretary of Defense, Service Secretaries, Service Chiefs, and agency heads; the combatant commander (in some countries); and a program manager.

f. **Embassy Administration.** Practical experience and a working knowledge of an American embassy's administration and support (ex. General Services Office (GSO), Regional Security Office (RSO), Budget and Finance (B&F), Housing Committee, and International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS). Experience in ensuring the State Department system supports military customers.

g. **Combined Operations & Exercises.** Practical experience and a working knowledge of Combined Exercises: how they are planned; how they are coordinated; the roles of the combatant command, embassy, and host nation; the execution; and post exercise considerations.

h. **Embassy Offices.** Practical experience and a working knowledge of the functions of the other offices of the embassy, and their interaction with defense offices: e.g. Political, Economic, Councilor, Justice, CIA, Agriculture, Commercial, Legal, and USAID.

i. **Combatant Command.** Practical experience and a working knowledge of what the combatant command does in the particular region; the development of the Theater Security Cooperation Plan; and the duties of FAOs at the theater headquarters level (in J2, J4, and J5).

j. **US Policy Goals and Formulation.** Practical experience and a working knowledge of US policy in the region and country, how that policy is formulated, and how that policy is implemented. Additionally, how does the embassy put together its Mission Program Plan?

k. **Regional Knowledge.** Detailed ACADEMIC knowledge of the region's politics, militaries, foreign affairs, economics, society, culture, geography, demography, and "hot issues."

(HQ, Department of the Army, DCS G-3, DAMO-SSF, 2003, pp. 5 & 6, emphasis added)

FAO candidates follow a logical and well thought out training pipeline which includes language training, followed up by in-country training (ICT), then advanced civil schooling (ACS), and finish with a FAOC.

**Language training first.** The functional Area 48 conducts most initial language training at the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey, Monterey, California. A small number of low density languages are taught at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in Arlington, VA or through a private contractor in the greater Washington, DC area. Course of instruction last from 25 to 64 weeks.

There is a **Foreign Area Officer Course (FAOC)** which is also a required phase of training for FA-48 officers. Officers typically attend this training while attending their language training at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) on the Presidio of Monterey, CA. This is a one-week course focusing on orienting the officer to: (1) the strategic and international level, (2) the FA48 career, and (3) In-Country Training (ICT).

Next step in FAO training is FAOs they get to travel extensively, conducting **In-Country Training (ICT)** in the region for which they are getting qualified to become experts. The most important goal of In-Country Training (ICT) is gaining practical experience in living and working in the region. Secondary goals include: honing language skills in real-world situations, developing contacts, and providing the credibility that future commanders will expect. FAOs are provided with a sizable master list of host nation Command and Staff Colleges, language schools, and a variety of other advanced courses and visit opportunities.

In-Country Training (ICT) is primarily focused on acquiring practical experience and know-how in working in your particular region while using your target language. ICT also provides you...an opportunity to learn to adapt to some of the "peculiarities" of life in your part of the world. Lastly, it provides you the experience and credibility that will be expected by your future commanders...

(HQ, Department of the Army, DCS G-3, DAMO-SSF, 2003, p. 5)

Within each of their respective regions of focus, FAOs have priority countries in which they are encouraged to travel. Given that FAOs are regional experts they are also strongly encouraged to travel—beyond adjacent countries—to peripheral countries to their regional sphere. The FAO community has developed a system of tables to organize the established country priorities for FAO ICT travel. Each region is divided into as many as three tiers in order to provide some prioritization. However, FAOs are given some flexibility to determine their own priorities for regional travel based on individual needs.

Each country is evaluated for a visit based on the relative political importance to US National Security interests, time/space/distance requirements, budget constraints, and current political situation. The list is not provided as a specific order of merit since, for example, it may be financially smart to visit several countries in one trip to a geographic sub-region thus saving airfare. FAOs are also encouraged to assess countries in their region based on specific training objectives they are trying to accomplish.

(HQ, Department of the Army, DCS G-3, DAMO-SSF, 2003, p. 23)

Next, the FAO candidate attends **Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS)** which entails earning a graduate degree in regional studies. FAOs attend an approved university, military or civilian, that offers the appropriate regional specialization program. Prospective FAOs who already possess a graduate degree must seek written approval for a waiver of this requirement. There is a master list of schools made available to candidates.

In this fashion the Army has put together a systematic approach to cultural immersion, regional expertise, situational awareness, and networking. The FAO program begins with a lengthy education and training period to develop officers who will serve as regional specialists in the grades of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel. The Army makes a considerable investment in training FAOs, investing 3 to 4 1/2 years in the process. The end result is individuals who are highly qualified to provide valuable real time information on the region in question.

### C. WHAT FAO TRAINING DOES AND DOES NOT BRING TO THE NSW WAR TABLE?

First and foremost, individuals with FAO skills can bring situational awareness and intelligence networks to bear, to identify and/or affect centers of gravity (COG) or critical nodes. Potential *NSW regional experts* could provide HUMINT resources and potential foreign forces intelligence support for NSW missions. Depending on their level of immersion they could provide the insider's perspective. They could also be used as interpreters, or at the very least, to screen interpreters. They could be used to identify key political leaders, both in formal and informal networks. If authorized, they could conduct time critical targeting or leadership interdiction operations and other sorts of short notice mission profiles. These NSW regional experts (still operators) could provide key mission planning support.

Secondary responsibility, individuals with this training could provide unit support roles. These support responsibilities should be very specific in scope and designed, so as not to put these highly trained NSW operators into administrative roles. Instead individuals with this training must be regarded as tremendous intelligence assets and should not to be improperly utilized. Certainly they could provide liaison capabilities with the host countries that NSW forces may be operating in. They could also arrange translator services. They could scout out or expedite the procurement for appropriate basing sites for Joint Special Operation Task Forces (JSOFT) or NSW Task Groups (NSWTG). They could also assist in the procurement of indigenous transportation as required.

FAOs establish standard operating procedures (SOP) within their regions. Also, it not uncommon to have FAOs operating concurrently in regions with other US service FAOs. These other FAOs can pass on SOPs to other personnel (i.e. NSW regional experts) coming into the region of interest. These SOPs could be used for short turn around requirements. SOPs represent the fundamental survival tools for NSW forces. NSW operators have the ability to adopt and adapt SOPs to fit their missions.

One other important note: FAOs are trained to operate autonomously.

Nevertheless, FAOs are not utilized at the operational or tactically levels...yet. FAO training is currently oriented so most FAOs become regional experts for unit commanders at the Corps level and/or theater commander staffs. FAOs are not being trained to support operational level commands or below. The Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps all have FAOs but there are very few Navy FAOs (perhaps none). Army FAOs and attachés have a deeper appreciation for Army capabilities and requirements. No one—outside the NSW community—truly understands NSW capabilities and requirements. A NSW regional expert could play an important liaison role within the joint and interagency realm. NSW individuals with FAO training would be high value assets—even more so if they are at the *advanced immersion level*.

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## VII. ANALYSIS FOR NSW CULTURAL IMMERSION

### A. REQUIREMENTS FOR NSW FORCES: CULTURAL IMMERSION IN HOSTILE, COMPLEX, AND UNSTABLE ENVIRONMENTS

**Complex environments** contain many diverse external elements that interact with and influence an organization. Under *unstable conditions*, environmental elements shift abruptly. “Instability may occur when competitors [terrorists/insurgents] react with aggressive moves and countermoves (Daft, 2003, p. 55).”

NSW is dealing with a diverse number of external factors that can be broken down into two broad categories, *domestic* and *foreign*. Some of the domestic factors include: Government policy decisions to use SOF; US public opinion of SOF; future NSW roles, if any, that NSW may fill within the US Homeland Defense; USSOCOM and Theater Special Operations Command (SOC) mission requirements; and supporting missions for the US Navy, Army, Marine Corps, or Air Force.

Some of the foreign factors include: foreign policy of other countries; foreign populations; cultural differences; religious differences; host-nation support for the US and coalition troops; foreign government and military willingness to cooperate in NSW efforts. With the foreign factors comes a great deal of uncertainty. Hostile uncertainty that NSW must face, for instance, comes from current and future terrorist and extremist groups, as well as other unknown enemies. Hostile uncertainty produces its own set of complex problems/challenges. Challenges that NSW must address: new enemy tactics; new enemy objectives and goals; new enemy weapons; new methods of communications and intelligence gathering. All of these factors combine to place renewed emphasis on NSW tactics, techniques, and procedures as they relate to NSW DA, SR, and CT missions.

NSW makes up less than one percent of the U.S. Navy personnel. NSW has approximately 5000 personnel total, which break down into about 2400 SEAL operators, 600 Special Warfare Combatant Crewmen (SWCC), with the remaining personnel engaged in support activities (“SEALs Focus Is On Terrorism, Core Missions, Interoperability”, 2003). Given these small numbers, if NSW is going to play an integral

part in the Global War on Terrorism it must fight smarter and even more efficiently. The demands on NSW are high but historically the NSW operation success rates are also high. Also, keep the “**special**” in Naval **Special** Warfare; NSW must adopt innovative tactics, techniques, and procedures for dealing with the new asymmetric threats posed by terrorists and insurgents. Cultural immersion is a force enhancement capability that should be given strong consideration.

## **B. NSW ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS**

Is NSW equipped to handle Cultural Immersion Training requirements? The short answer is...“yes!” The NSW community is over 60 years old and the **Naval Special Warfare Command (CNSWC)** has been established for 16 years. The CNSWC and its subordinate commands are well organized to support one another internally. They are also well suited to externally support other units or headquarters. NSW went through a major reorganization in the last four years to meet overseas deployment requirements. The result of this reorganization is increased NSW forward presence and higher authority requirements are more readily met. Due to its inherent small size, NSW lacks some of the administration abilities that larger commands have, but it also has a reduced bureaucracy as a result. New ideas and creativity are encouraged to solve problems—such as enhancing situational and battlespace awareness, and intelligence and operational preparation of the battlespace. This what cultural immersion represents.

Subordinate to the CNSWC is the NSW community which is broken down into a *divisional structure* with **six major commands**: two operational war fighting commands, two mobility commands, one training command, and one research and development command. Each one of these major commands has operational command (OPCON) over a range of three to ten subordinate NSW commands, known as “Teams.” These six major commands each have similar departments to those of the CNSWC and provide both *external* and *internal* services (external services being those focused more on the operational levels of NSW force allocation and the internal services referring to support to the subordinate Teams).

The majority of these **Teams**, while in the continental US (CONUS), are self-contained to internally train and equip their own fighting elements, but require funding



support from external higher authority. The **Sea Air Land (SEAL) Teams** provide the final external tactical level NSW expertise and support for all missions related to larger maritime, air-to-ground, and land warfare operations. The SEAL Teams, are the fighting units that carry out the actual NSW missions (DA, SR, CT, UW, PR, Hydrographic Reconnaissance, CD, FID, and IW as well as collateral missions such as CSAR and Protective Services). The **Special Boat Teams (SBT)** and **Swimmer Delivery Vehicle (SDV)** Teams provide the internal mobility assets and personnel to support NSW and other SOF missions.

[In reference to Command and Control] As environmental uncertainty increases, organizations tend to become more organic, which means decentralizing authority and responsibility to lower levels...encouraging teamwork (Daft, 2003, p. 61).

**NSW fits the organic command and control model.** NSW follows a model of short vertical linkage for authorization to execute missions and a short horizontal linkage for supporting fires, mobility, and medical assistance. Once a **NSW Squadron (NSWRON)** is deployed, the NSWRON commander provides the higher level commands with the plan of action to accomplish the mission. While—depending on the mission type—authority to execute a mission resides with higher levels of authority, the actual execution is left to the lower level units to coordinate and accomplish. This process avoids exhaustive planning, maintains operational security, and allows flexibility if plan modifications are required.

**Division structure works for NSW.** According to Daft (2003) [referring to professional organizations], a divisional structure, by virtue of its size, has an inherent ability to maximize coordination of efforts across functional departments (p. 41). Additionally, the “divisional structure promotes flexibility and change due to its ability to adapt rapidly to the needs of its environment” (p.41, emphasis added). Divisional structures: are suited to fast change in unstable environments; lead to client satisfaction because product responsibility and contact points are clear; allow units to adapt to differences in products, regions, clients; decentralize decision making (Daft, 2003, p. 42, emphasis added).

NSW as a whole fits this divisional model extremely well. The **NSW Groups (NSWG)** and deployed **NSW Task Groups (NSWTG)** are the primary conduits between the operational fighting units within NSW and the NSW headquarters (CNSWC). They provide financial, material, training, logistic, and administrative support to the deploying NSWRONS. The NSWRON commanders have direct access to the Group commanders, which allows minimal filtering of critical information, rapid decision-making, and proper adaptation to changing environments.

The SEAL Teams and deployed NSWRONS are organized with self-reliance in mind. Each unit has its own departments (diving, air, weapons, communications, etc.) with the focus of supporting the SEAL platoons. These platoons, in turn, are made up of 16-17 SEAL operators, each with his own specialty (diving, weapons, communications, medical, air, etc.). Each Team/NSWRON also has a short vertical chain-of-command that consists of the six SEAL platoon commanders/Officers-in-charge (OICs) up through the operations officer, and through the executive officer to the commanding officer. It is common for the SEAL platoon OICs to interact directly with the commanding officer. A major advantage to this divisional structure, as with the case of the NSWG/TG, is minimal filtering of information between the operators and the decision makers. With this level of flexibility comes the ability to conduct multiple NSW missions efficiently and effectively under each smaller **NSWRON Task Unit (NSWTU)**. This also holds true for the NSWRON-NSWTG relationship, but on a larger scale (e.g. multiple NSW operations).

**NSW Division Structure Potential Pitfalls?** With the division structure comes some potential failing points. Daft points out, that within division structured organizations there can be the elimination of economy of scale, poor coordination across product lines, elimination of in-depth competence and technical specialization, and integration and standardization across product lines can be made difficult (Daft, 2003, p.42). Daft brings up some valid points. However, NSW, unlike its larger counterpart military divisional structures, does not tend to experience these pitfalls—at least not at the NSW Teams or NSWRONS. They have highly specialized personnel, in some cases expert personnel trained in multiple specialties that help achieve an economy of force. The only exception might be found with the NSWG/TG if they attempt to coordinate

multiple subordinate units and overextend their limited staffs. Examples might include too many requirements for intelligence (limited resources), logistics, or mobility, all of which are legitimate issues, but the fact remains human information overload is a shortcoming of limited staff organizations.

**Environmental sectors in the NSW task environment.** The environment within which an organization exists within is comprised of several sectors or subdivisions. There are ten sectors that Daft refers to; only four of these are sectors with which NSW must contend.

The first is the **human resources sector**. NSW relies heavily on its **people**—not ships, planes, or tanks—for its wartime assets. NSW training is some of the most demanding in the world. The focus is to maximize a SEAL operator’s potential and produce an exceptionally aggressive war fighter. To achieve this level of excellence there is a price: only 20% of all SEAL candidates actually graduate. As a consequence, CNSWC is the smallest of the three major component commands of USSOCOM. NSW fights exceptionally hard, mean while, to recruit quality candidates and retain the trained operators it already has. “People are the top priority for the NSW community”—is a phrase that is burned into the minds of all SEALs, Special Warfare Combatant Crewmen (SWCC), and NSW support personnel from the moment they join the NSW community and particular emphasis is placed on the 16 man SEAL platoons. Without these personnel, their high level of training, and operational experience, NSW units can lose their **relative superiority** over potential adversaries. Relative superiority is a condition that exists when an attacking force, generally smaller, gains a decisive advantage over a larger or well-defended enemy (McRaven, 1996, p. 4).

The second sector is the **market sector**. For NSW the market sector is USSOCOM, Theater SOCs, USN, USA, USAF, and USMC. NSW provides a variety of mission profiles that in one way or another can support these end users.

The third sector is the **government sector**. This relates to the market sector since NSW, like the rest of the military, works for the government and depends on political processes and support. Without this support NSW would cease to exist.

The final sector is the **international sector**. NSW operates all over the world. NSW was founded to deal with insurgents, subversives, guerillas, terrorists, and in general, all enemies of the US and its allies. In this example these groups along with foreign hostile governments represent the “international competition” that Daft refers to (Daft, 2003, p.51). It is within the international sector that the most **uncertainty** is generated for the future of NSW.

There are certain levels of consistency in the other three sectors (e.g. suppliers, specific commands of authority, human inputs in the training pipelines, etc.) that will not change rapidly or without some foreshadowing. But with the increased sensitivity to and awareness of terrorism since September 11, 2001 comes an increase in operational tempo (Optempo), personnel tempo (Perstempo), expectations of NSW, etc. The issue at hand is successfully identifying who the players are within this sector. Generating intelligence and cultivating international relationships must increase dramatically before this sector’s level of uncertainty can be lowered. Given the nature of the threat, though, NSW and other SOF have a comparative advantage in this sector.

## **C. NSW TRAINING AND CAREER PATHS**

### **1. Initial Path to Becoming a Navy SEAL**

**Step 1 (Enlisted).** An individual must first enlist in the US Navy (USN) and go through basic indoctrination or Boot Camp. In most cases, NSW trainees have volunteered for and been selected to go to Basic Underwater Demolition School (BUDS), Naval Special Warfare Center (NSWC), located at the Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) Coronado, CA. Another source for enlisted personnel into the NSW pipeline is augmentation from another occupation within the USN or another service. All enlisted, regardless of their source, must attend BUDS to become SEALs.

**Step 1 (Officer).** For officers the path to BUDS is slightly different. Most officers go to college first and receive their undergraduate degrees, and then are commissioned through a variety of sources (including the US Naval Academy [USNA], Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps [NROTC], Officer Candidate School [OCS], etc.). Prior to their commissioning as Ensigns (beginning rank, O-1), these midshipmen or officer candidates will go through a selection process to determine their warfare

designation (including Naval Special Warfare) based on a number of criteria, such as officer ship, academics, and physical performance. NSW officers, like enlisted personnel, may also be acquired through augmentation from other fleet assignments or other services, but they must still attend BUDS.

**Step 2.** Once at BUDS, all trainees are put through one of the toughest military training regimens in the world. It consists of 26 weeks—grouped together into three phases—of physically demanding and mentally challenging training:

- **First phase:** *Conditioning Phase* (8 weeks). Physical training (PT), swimming, and small boat handling. Subjects taught include hydrographic reconnaissance, physical health and nutrition, and basic maritime navigation (MARNAV).
- **Second Phase:** *Dive Phase* (8 weeks). Technical and academic phase of BUDS training. There is classroom work that involves diving theory, medicine, physics, and diving systems and equipment. Candidates develop their combat swimming skills and conduct various dive profiles and night combat ship attack exercises.
- **Third Phase:** *Land Warfare Phase* (10 weeks). The first five weeks are spent at BUDS and focus on land navigation, small arms, demolitions theory, communications, and squad level tactics. The second five weeks are spent on a remote island training facility. Training includes squad level tactics, underwater and land demolitions, and full mission profile (FMP) exercises.

**Step 3.** BUDS graduates will be sent to Basic Airborne School (3 weeks), Fort Benning, GA, to learn static line parachuting. Training involves PT, ground school, parachute drills, jump simulation equipment, and static line parachuting.

**Step 4.** Once a trainee graduates from BUDS and airborne training he then checks into SEAL Qualification Training (SQT) also located at the Naval Special Warfare Center. SQT is a three-month course that involves every aspect of SEAL tactical training. Subjects taught and practiced are air operations, land and maritime navigation, small arms, communications, combat medicine, demolitions, desert warfare, small unit tactics, combat swimmer, and other maritime operations (i.e. over the beach [OTB] reconnaissance). There are numerous physical and academic challenges in SQT. Upon completion of SQT, a “trainee” is officially designated a NSW operator...a SEAL and is allowed to wear the NSW warfare pin, the “Trident.”

## 2. Once Qualified as a NSW Officer or Enlisted NSW Operator:

**Step 5.** The new SEALs, once pinned, arrive at their new SEAL Teams or are sent off for Swimmer Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Training, mini submarine training, and then on to their SDV Teams. Once at the Teams the new operators are placed into SEAL or SDV platoons and assigned combat roles (point man, M-60 gunner, grenadier, rear security, etc.) and collateral responsibilities (air operations, boats, diving, weapons, communications, medical, intelligence, etc.)—both are required to sustain the platoon while in combat operations.

**Step 6.** Depending on platoon job assignments, individuals with particular aptitudes or personal aspirations will be given the opportunity to attend military and civilian specialty schools. Schooling opportunities include a wide range of subjects: sniper, NSW intelligence, target analysis, advanced reconnaissance target analysis exploitation, advanced combat medicine, gun smithing and armorer, small boat repair, freefall parachuting, jump master (static and freefall), parachute rigging and air load planning, *language(s)*, communications, dive equipment repair, advanced applied explosives, protective services, *regional orientation courses*, photo intelligence, ranger and pathfinder, etc.

The majority of NSW **language training** (length and type varies) is obtained at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) at the Presidio of Monterey, Ca. The DLI also provides **cultural interaction programs** as part its the various language curricula.

The five **regional orientation courses** (5 days) available to NSW are offered through the US Air Force Special Operations School (USAFSOS), Hurlburt Field, FL. Regions discussed are (1) Asia-Pacific, (2) Latin America, (3) Middle East, (4) Russia, Central Europe, and Central Asia, and (5) Sub-Saharan Africa. The courses focus on culture, religion, history, politics, regional orientation, terrorism, and territorial issues. There is also a five day **Cross Cultural Communications Course** that discusses the effect of culture on the communication process.

**Step 7.** Following the six months of individual training, the SEAL Platoon comes together and begins training as a unit—under a NSWG training cadre—developing standard operating procedures (SOP) to conduct combat missions. The training at this

level focuses on advanced techniques of insertion, direct action on objectives, and extractions. Subjects include demolitions, parachuting operations, combat swimmer, land warfare raids and ambushes, close quarter battle (CQB), special reconnaissance (SR) and hydrographic reconnaissance, maritime operations (MAROPs), visit board search and seizure (VBSS), and variety of other training evolutions.

**Step 8.** The remaining six months can vary, but are generally utilized to conduct SEAL Team/NSWRON interoperability training, pre-deployment preparations, operational readiness evaluations, and more advanced training for the platoons (i.e. shooting schools and full mission profile training exercises).

**Step 9.** Once preparations are made for a Team deployment, the Teams along with additional force multipliers become composite commands known as NSW Squadrons (NSWRON).

Under the new reorganization, NSW 21, the squadron is built around the entire SEa, Air and Land (SEAL) Team deploying and includes its senior leadership, SEAL Vehicle Delivery Teams and Special Boat Teams, as well as personnel detachments such as mobile communications teams, tactical cryptologic support and explosive ordnance disposal. Additionally, they receive support from five permanently deployed NSW units overseas.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 20)

**Step 10.** The NSWRONs, in turn, deploy for six months overseas and are assigned OPCON to the appropriate higher authority in the respective theater of operations. Forward **NSW Units (NSWU)** will provide bases of operations for these NSWRONs. NSWRONs, once on station, carry out all assigned mission requirements—wartime engagements (i.e. OEF and OIF), FID, Joint Combined Exercises Training (JCET), and major overseas exercises—via Theater Special Operations Commands (SOCs), or respective naval higher authorities. NSW forces can operate independently or in conjunction with other U.S. SOF or within U.S. Navy CSGs and ESGs.

While deployed NSW has the means to disseminate information and intelligence in a near real-time manner:

**Systems Integration.** By integrating a number of significant systems (Secret Internet Protocol Routing Network, Mission Support Center, and Special Operations Mission Planning Environment) NSW has decreased its footprint forward. At the same time, it continues to provide its land,

ship, and submarine-based forces the ability to conduct worldwide collaborative joint mission planning. The NSW Mission Support Center employs “reach back technology,” providing forces with the operational picture and continuous battle space awareness [perhaps in the future supported by HUMINT networks developed by culturally immersed NSW personnel]. It also enables deployed forces to connect to resources required to rapidly plan and conduct successful special operations missions.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, p. 20, emphasis added)

**Step 11.** Depending on the number of deployments an officer or enlisted person has done—in addition to the projected rotation date (PRD)—will dictate the next step in their career path. In many cases shore duty (i.e. instructor duty, educational opportunities, technical schooling, etc.) may follow their SEAL/SBT/SDV Team assignments. They will in many cases return to the Teams throughout their career progression holding greater jobs of responsibilities. For the officers and enlisted, some of the non-SEAL/SBT/SDV Team jobs may include opportunities to work overseas (i.e. SOC staffs, USN staffs afloat, personnel exchange programs [PEP], embassies, other SOF commands, etc.).

**Step 12.** Post deployment education. Some NSW officers are given the opportunity to pursue graduate level education at the Naval Post Graduate School (NPS), Monterey, CA or other military/civilian institutions. Some enlisted NSW personnel are given the opportunity to pursue undergraduate level education through a variety of means to include USNA, NROTC, Enlisted College Programs (ECP), Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training (BOOST), as well as the Naval Post Graduate School (NPS), Monterey, CA or other military/civilian institutions.

#### **D. ARCHITECTURE FOR NSW CULTURAL IMMERSION**

NSW, as it exists presently, has the means to support the development of a NSW “**Regional Expertise Cultural Immersion (RECI)**” program within its ranks. There is a constant need for actionable intelligence, regional, situational, and battlespace awareness by all war fighters internal and external to NSW. NSW’s structure is sufficiently flexible to meet these intelligence requirements of its various war fighters. NSW is also sufficiently postured to get personnel trained in cultural immersion to at least the *primary level of cultural immersion* (during step 6 above), if not up to the



*intermediate level of cultural immersion* (during step 12 above). Advanced civil schooling, regional orientation and intelligence courses, in-country training models, and language training are all in place for NSW to utilize.

For **NSW (qualified) enlisted personnel**, primary level cultural immersion training is available through language schooling and the regional orientation courses (step 6). There are also intelligence and targeting schools that platoon intelligence specialists (IS) can attend. There are enlisted SEALs with some language skills, undergraduate education, and in other cases even graduate level education. Additionally there are experienced SEALs who operated in the former by region-oriented NSW Teams, and therefore have some of this background already. All of this information could be screened and used to recruit personnel for further immersion training.

The enlisted SEALs are the foundation of the NSW community. Junior enlisted will clearly tend to have to focus more on honing their war-fighting abilities. However, as enlisted personnel advance in the ranks, become more senior, or are injured, there could more opportunities to gain cultural immersion skills and work themselves into RECI oriented jobs. Enlisted personnel are also given the opportunity for commissions through programs such as Seaman-to-Admiral, OCS, NROTC, and even the USNA. NSW enlisted personnel could be utilized as *NSW-RECI specialists* and be assigned to a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), NSW Task Group, or NSW Task Unit. NSW-RECI specialists would best be utilized at the forward NSW locations, such as the NSW Units (NSWUs: Bahrain, Guam, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Germany) or one of the Theater SOCs where they could be temporarily assigned command (TACON) to the JSOTF/NSWTG/NSWTU. The premise is that in these locations the NSW-RECI specialists could travel the region (focusing on maritime/littoral areas), develop intelligence/support networks, and improve their cultural immersion skills.

\*Recommend post-platoon chiefs. They are the most likely candidates for these types of jobs.

For **NSW (qualified) Officers**, elementary cultural immersion is available through language schooling and the regional orientation courses as well. Additionally, there are intelligence and targeting schools that platoon officers can attend. Also, some NSW officers may already have some language skills and most have undergraduate

education, some perhaps in relevant disciplines. Again too: there are experienced NSW Officers who operated in the formerly region-oriented NSW Teams and therefore have some of this background already. All of this information could be screened and used to recruit for further immersion training. Junior NSW officers are platoon commanders and assistant platoon commanders and, as junior officers, will need to focus more on becoming proficient in their war fighting skills first. However, as NSW officers advance in the ranks, become more senior, or are injured they could more easily work into RECI oriented jobs.

Also, some NSW officers are given the opportunity to pursue graduate level education at NPS or other military/civilian institutions. Through a number of graduate level education programs the Navy already assists Naval Officers (including NSW) to pursue graduate education on their own. If **NSW-RECI qualification** is desired, the NSW officer could pursue advanced education at one of the FAO-approved institutions. Upon graduating, the **NSW-RECI Liaison Officer (LNO)** would be given a **subspecialty code**—similar to the FAO functional codes and Navy subspecialty codes assigned presently—designating the region in which he is qualified.

Following advanced civil schooling, subspecialty code assignment, and subsequent language training the NSW officer could be utilized as a NSW-RECI LNO and be assigned to a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), NSW Task Group, or NSW Task Unit. NSW-RECI officers would best be utilized at the forward NSW locations, such as the NSWUs (Bahrain, Guam, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Germany) or one of the Theater SOCs and be temporarily assigned command (TACON) to the JSOTF/NSWTG/NSWTU. Again, as with the RECI specialists, NSW-RECI LNOs could travel the region (focusing on maritime/littoral areas), develop intelligence/support networks, and improve their cultural immersion skills.

\*Recommend post-platoon and/or post-operations officers, limited duty officers (LDOs), and chief warrant officers (CWOs) looking to remain operational. Many NSW officers prefer to remain operational throughout their careers.

The grading within the officer and senior enlisted fitness reporting process would need to reflect the value added of NSW-RECI LNOs and specialists. The goal here would be to make NSW-RECI jobs highly desirable and career enhancing for all who pursued them.

#### **E. MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR NSW-RECI PROGRAM**

According to Daft (2003), “effectiveness” is an instrument used by an organization to evaluate attainment of goals (p.23). There are three traditional approaches used to measure the effectiveness of an organization. A *goal approach* is concerned with the output side and whether the organization achieves its goals in terms of desired levels of output. A *resource-based approach* assesses effectiveness observing the beginning of the process and evaluating whether the organization effectively obtains the resources necessary for high performance. The *internal process approach* looks at internal activities and assesses effectiveness by indicators of internal health and efficiency (p. 24). There is a more recently developed fourth approach called the *stakeholder approach* which acknowledges that each organization has many constituencies that have a stake in its outcomes; “it focuses on the satisfaction of the stakeholders as a performance indicator” (Daft, 2003, pp. 24-25).

The NSW community as a whole utilizes each of the four types of effectiveness at all levels. The **goal approach** can be witnessed in several venues: the number of missions assigned to NSW forces during times of conflict; the number of successes reported on Post Operation Reports (POSTOPs) or After Action Reports (AARs); and the training and readiness reporting. It is through these reports that statistical data and/or reporting of mission specific details can be evaluated for NSW goal attainment. The goal approach also can be seen in reviews of the actual outcomes of operations conducted by assigned NSW forces, when a comparison is made to these outcomes met the requirements laid down in the NSW chain-of-command’s (COC) vision/mission statements.

NSW also uses the **resource approach** to evaluate its effectiveness. In the case of NSW this comes with NSW operators’ recruitment, training, and retention. NSW focuses on training and equipping its SEAL and NSW Boat Team members to best meet

all strategic, operational, and tactical objectives. NSW personnel are the key element to NSW's effectiveness. An example that best demonstrates how adaptive and supportive NSW is of its resources is when NSW conducted a complete community-wide reorganization in less than three years (to include changing unit structures and designations, training, and deployment).

NSW also follows the **internal process approach**. From the outset NSW has referred to itself in terms of "Teams." NSW reinforces the "team concept" through all levels of training and readiness preparation. The idea is that all members have a say in how the mission of the Team can best be accomplished. NSW is adaptive with respect to changes. For example: in the event a team member (regardless of how junior) has an improved method or piece of equipment for conducting operations, the method or tool is evaluated in short order and, if deemed effective, is incorporated into the Team's standard operating procedures (SOP).

NSW, by the very nature of its mission statement, focuses on the **stakeholder approach** as evidenced above in the mission/vision discussion. CNSWC represents the middle ground between the upper levels of command that require NSW forces to carry out missions for them and the NSW forces themselves, who require CNSWC to provide the guidance and financial support to train and equip their assigned combat forces. It is the stakeholder approach NSW focuses on (without entirely neglecting the other three approaches). The following is a sampling of NSW stakeholders and their interests:

- **United States and its Citizens**—Security, sound financial investments, extremely well trained forces.
- **US Domestic and Foreign Policy Makers**—Low Intensity Conflicts conducted by NSW forces, subtle/"low key" operations vs. massive troop movements and "shock and awe" operations.
- **US Department of Defense (Secretary of Defense, Sec. Of the Navy, Asst. Sec Defense Special Operations Low Intensity Conflict, Joint Chiefs of Staff)**—Highly trained and effective forces, subtle/"low key" operations vs. massive troop movements and "shock and awe" operations.
- **Commander US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)**—Highly skilled Maritime Special Operations forces conducting NSW-related joint (purple) missions.
- **Chief of Naval Operations (CNO)**—Highly skilled Maritime Special Operations forces conducting NSW-related maritime (blue) missions.

- **Theater Commanders (via theater SOC)s**—Highly skilled Maritime Special Operations forces conducting NSW-related (purple or blue) missions.
- **Naval Special Warfare Community**—Supporting US political and military objectives as directed by those entities mentioned above. Accomplishing all assigned missions successfully. Supporting all local and deployed NSW units and their families.
- **Commander NSW Command (CNSWC)**—Providing NSW forces to all appropriate combatant commanders. Training, equipping, and deploying highly skilled NSW forces.
- **Each of the Six NSW Component Commands**—Meeting the requirements established by CNSWC to train, equip, and deploy highly skilled NSW forces.
- **Each of the subordinate NSW commands under each of the NSW Component Commands**—Provide various levels of training and necessary equipment to all assigned NSW operators. Produce highly skilled NSW operators for all assigned NSW missions.

NSW could apply **measures of effectiveness** (MOE) to the NSW-RECI program by several means. The first is through internal reports generated from base level units (examples include: deployment/exercise AARs, personnel/retention, levels of immersion training achieved, etc.) The second method is through the external reporting generated from higher authority (Deployment Orders [DEPORDS], POSTOPs, Situation Reports [SITREPS], etc.). By comparing these reports to the various vision and mission statements generated by the NSW Chain-of-Command, definable measures of effectiveness for NSW-RECI program could be obtained.

## **F. CULTURAL IMMERSION CAN WORK WITHIN NSW**

Each level of the military chain-of-command down to the CNSWC has recognized/acknowledged the importance of situational, regional, and battlespace awareness—which, essentially, boils down to actionable intelligence. There is clearly a need for a solution to these elusive problems.

**Creativity & Ingenuity (SOF Traits)** are the abilities to think and come up with novel ideas or alternative solutions to challenging tasks. They allow the practitioner to not only think outside of the box, but to operate unconventionally while still inside.

The **NSW culture** supports and facilitates the values of teamwork, creativity, and ingenuity within the NSW community. NSW—with its organization, capabilities,

internal culture, and training—is capable of adapting to better function in any environment. NSW has always viewed itself as able to balance environmental needs and “strategic focus.” By virtue of its size, NSW has this flexibility; it adapts to situations fairly rapidly without huge operational requirements.

Given its cohesiveness, the NSW community works collectively in an effort to achieve common objectives. NSW is one of the primary units tasked to gather the desired “actionable intelligence” mentioned above and, when authorized, will act on it. One of the means to accomplish this tasking is through a NSW-RECI program. NSW has the training pipeline to accommodate the required schooling, to get its personnel NSW-RECI qualified—without derailing NSW operators’ careers. There are established programs NSW can use as models for a RECI program. There are overseas NSW units and billets that can properly employ individuals with such specialized skills. NSW also has the measures of effectiveness to evaluate the value that would be added by a NSW-RECI program. Cultural immersion training, if properly employed, could make NSW operations run more smoothly and effectively. The result is...**fewer terrorists/insurgents** for the US and the world as a whole to contend with.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

### A. THE OFFICIAL NEED FOR CULTURAL IMMERSION

After a thorough review of the 9/11 Commission's Report, the US National Security Strategy, US National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, National Military Strategy, and various military vision statements and objectives, it is apparent there is a constant drumbeat for **increased intelligence** and **proactive operations** to disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations as part of the GWOT. There is also a recurring theme about the "New Enemy of Freedom" and how this enemy operates as if it is a ghost—with complete anonymity.

A wide variety of associated terms—referring to desired US capabilities—have been discussed throughout this thesis, terms such as actionable intelligence, cultural understanding, special operations, mindsets and motivation of the enemy, enhanced language skills, creativity, social networks, reconnaissance, combating terrorism, direct action, unconventional capabilities, information operations, HUMINT, human information resourcing, intelligence and operational preparation of the battlespace, regional expertise, immersion skills, and the list goes on. In short, they all require that we become more situationally aware in given regions of the world through a unity of effort. Decision makers armed with this situational awareness will be better positioned to make decisive decisions, decisions that will include when to employ highly capable forces to go after terrorists, their organizations, and their supporting infrastructure.

The national requirements are all here, but they raise the question: How do you collect time critical and actionable intelligence, and then act to disrupt or intercept small well-organized groups such as terrorists? One possible method suggested in these documents is via deployment of **specialized troops** backed by **solid intelligence support architecture**. This method, though, raises additional questions: Has this been done before? If so, by whom and under what circumstances? What special skills did they have? Given implications for the strategy and policy raised by these questions I wondered what SOF—and **Naval Special Warfare** in particular—might do, and why **cultural immersion skills**, couldn't be used as part of the solution.

## **B. CULTURAL IMMERSION: USED IN WARFARE**

I set about researching instances in which cultural immersion skills or training had been employed in the last century. My research focused on the WWI Arab Revolt, OSS operations in WWII, and NSW operations in the Vietnam War.

In reference to **T.E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt**, I found he used cultural immersion throughout his operations with the Arabs as they fought against the Turks. The key takeaways from his experience were the importance of speaking native languages, knowing the region, understanding the Arab culture and religion, and having an insider's perspective of how the Arab mind worked. Lawrence developed strong social bonds with the Arabs. He lived among them and his skills allowed him to gain access into Arab circles that most westerners would never achieve. Even so, he did profess that even with his skills and knowledge—due to his physical appearance—he could not blend in with the local peoples (he did attempt to do so by wearing native attire). Regardless of the ‘appearance challenge,’ he was able to establish a very effective working relationship with Arab leaders and carried out a successful guerilla campaign thanks to his considerable cultural immersion skills. He accomplished all this, while using simple means of transport (i.e. camels) and relatively limited lines of communication.

**During WWII**, the US was unprepared for the intelligence requirements of the time or the theater locations. The US military in 1941 did not have a specialized force structure (i.e. a USSOCOM) that it could call upon to meet the Axis power's threats. With necessity being the mother of invention, the OSS was formed and set the standards for SOF. The skill sets of the OSS of the 1940s are not unlike those of present-day SOF, to include guerilla warfare, land and waterborne commando training, small arms, hand-to-hand, unconventional/irregular warfare, partisan and resistance training, small boat and submersible tactics, communications, flight school, foreign language, parachuting, demolitions, regional expertise, and cultural understanding. All of these were needed and employed throughout the course of WWII. Cultural immersion skills, in particular, were used effectively in both Western Europe and in the Burma Campaigns by OSS and related allied units.



As with Lawrence, appearance posed a problem in some locations, language in others. But even with the physical and language barriers many OSS units faced, they were able to overcome them through *reliable interpreters*, *regional experts* (i.e. missionaries or military previously posted in the region), and *native troops*. The Burma/Kachin OSS units, like Lawrence and his irregulars—though not quite to the same degree—developed common goals, bonds of trust, and unity of effort against the Japanese.

**During Vietnam**, a new type of warfare emerged, **guerilla-insurgent warfare**. This, for conventional commanders and their troops, presented a constant challenge. SOF in Vietnam evolved/changed to address this type of threat. In many cases the threat was invisible. The enemy, like terrorists today, could operate in cities or out in the provinces, towns, villages, and hamlets. To contend with this threat, NSW (SEALs), were paired up with LDNN, PRU, Hoi Chanh, Biet Hai, and other irregular forces—through the Phoenix program—a match that effectively used what cultural immersion and military skills the SEALs and their Vietnamese counterparts had available to develop field experience to carry out an extremely effective campaign against the VCI and NVA. Like the OSS in Burma, the Vietnam SEALs could not blend in with the local populations, but their indigenous forces could. So they capitalized on that fact and developed intelligence networks. The result was an **organic ability to collect actionable intelligence**, plan missions, and interdict VCI leadership, guerillas, and cache sites in short order.

The SEALs did not totally immerse themselves in the local cultures, but they did realize the tremendous value added by using *culturally immersed personnel* (Vietnamese units and individuals previously discussed). The SEALs used what immersion skills they did have to establish the levels of trust to operate with and gather information through these personnel. These immersed Vietnamese personnel were extremely well connected throughout the various provinces. They provided the *insider perspective* and *requisite language skills* to better enable the SEALs to conduct the NSW missions the SEALs were sent to Vietnam to accomplish.

### C. CULTURAL IMMERSION: IN MILITARY CONTEXT

**Cultural immersion** is a broad-based combination of education, training, and practical skills and experiences that allows a practitioner to adapt and/or become immersed in a particular group or society on some level. Cultural immersion entails an understanding of integrated patterns of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts, in other words, the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of an ethnic, religious, or social group. The fundamental objectives of cultural immersion are first to develop a SA in a given region, and second to develop a *network of trust* among the local people (native, naturalized, or transient) within the region of interest.

**Levels of cultural immersion** can be broken down into the following five levels: *peripheral, primary, intermediate, advanced, and indigenous or native*. Each level depends on the proficiency of culturally immersed personnel to accomplish their given tasks or job assignments utilizing their knowledge/experience, which in turn depends on knowledge of local language(s), ideologies/religions, social interactions, politics/leadership, daily routines/rituals, economics, values/ethics, and region-specific adaptations.

**Cultural immersion skills allow the military practitioner** to communicate with indigenous or foreign personnel, civilian or military. Cultural immersion skills are a means to an end. From a military perspective they should be utilized for two purposes: first to gather *HUMINT with an insider's perspective*; second, they can be used to help conduct more sophisticated, nuanced, and accurate mission planning and execution within a given battlespace or region. Furthermore, cultural immersion allows units with these capabilities to better accomplish mission essential coordination with other allied or indigenous paramilitary type forces. Mission essential coordination may include some or all of the following items: CAS, artillery fire support, TGO, and deconfliction (to avoid fratricide). Cultural immersion can also provide a means by which to gain logistics support (weapons, ammunition, food, water, shelter, first aid, etc.).

#### D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NSW CULTURAL IMMERSION

If the intent is that NSW forces better establish intelligence networks which, in turn, will allow these NSW forces to track down and address the threats presented by terrorist organizations or insurgent movements in a direct and time sensitive manner, then it seems paramount to consider what NSW could learn—or borrow—from other entities. Which resource or warfare specialty has the focus on immersion skills to the fidelity that would allow NSW to get its forces trained to at least a *primary* or *intermediate* level of proficiency, and preferably the latter?

The answer is the **Army's FAO program**. The FAO program is designed to create highly trained experts on specific regions of the globe. It has the pre-existing schools and training required to qualify NSW personnel to an acceptable level of cultural immersion to operate. FAO training is well designed and systematic. The result is advanced firsthand practical experiences in a given region, to include the development of contacts and potential networks. FAOs function at an *intermediate* to *advanced immersion level*.

Individuals with FAO skills can bring situational awareness and intelligence networks to bear, to identify and/or affect COGs or critical nodes. *NSW regional experts* could provide HUMINT resources and indigenous military forces intelligence with support for NSW missions. Depending on their level of immersion they could provide an insider's perspective. They could also be used as interpreters, or at the very least, to screen interpreters. They could be used to identify key political leaders, both in formal and informal networks. If authorized, they could conduct time critical targeting or leadership interdiction operations and other sorts of short notice mission profiles. These NSW regional experts (still operators) could provide key mission planning support.

As a secondary responsibility, individuals with this training could fill unit support roles. These support responsibilities should be very specific in scope and designed so as not to put these highly trained NSW operators into administrative roles. Instead, individuals with this training must be regarded as tremendous intelligence assets and should not to be improperly utilized. Certainly, they could provide liaison capabilities with the host countries where NSW forces may be operating. They could also arrange

translator services. They could scout out or expedite the procurement of appropriate basing sites for JSOTF or NSWTG. They could also assist in the procurement of indigenous transportation, as required.

NSW, as it exists presently, has the means to support the development of a NSW **“Regional Expertise Cultural Immersion (RECI)”** program within its ranks. There is a constant need for actionable intelligence, and regional, situational, and battlespace awareness by all war fighters internal and external to NSW. NSW is structured to be sufficiently flexible to meet these intelligence requirements of the various war fighters it supports. The NSW organization is also postured to get personnel trained in cultural immersion to—at least initially a *primary level of cultural immersion*, if not up to the *intermediate level of cultural immersion*. The advanced civil schooling, regional orientation and intelligence courses, in-country training models, and language training opportunities are all in place for NSW to utilize.

For **NSW enlisted personnel**, primary level cultural immersion training is available through language schooling and regional orientation courses. There is also intelligence and targeting schools that platoon intelligence specialists can attend. There are enlisted SEALs with some language skills, undergraduate education, and in some cases even graduate level education—additionally there are experienced SEALs that operated in the formerly region-oriented NSW Teams.

As enlisted personnel advance in the ranks there could more opportunities gain cultural immersion skills and work into RECI oriented jobs. Enlisted personnel are also given the opportunity for commissions through programs. NSW enlisted personnel could be utilized as **NSW-RECI specialists** and be assigned to a JSOTF, NSWTG, or NSWTU. NSW-RECI specialists would best be utilized at the forward NSW locations such as the NSWUs (NSWUs: Bahrain, Guam, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Germany) or one of the Theater SOCs and be TACON to the JSOTF/NSWTG/NSWTU. The premise is that in these locations the NSW-RECI specialists could travel the region (focus on maritime/littoral portions), develop intelligence/support networks, and improve their cultural immersion skills.

For **NSW qualified Officers**, elementary cultural immersion is available through language schooling and the regional orientation courses as well. Additionally, there are intelligence and targeting schools that the platoon officers can attend. Also some NSW officers with some language skills and most have undergraduate education—additionally there are experienced NSW Officers that operated under the formerly region-oriented NSW Teams.

As NSW officers advance in the ranks they could more easily work into immersion oriented jobs. Some NSW officers are given the opportunity to pursue graduate level education at NPS or other military/civilian institutions. There are a number of graduate level education programs that the Navy has in place to assist Naval Officers (including NSW) to pursue graduate education on their own.

If **NSW-RECI qualification** is desired, the NSW officer could pursue one of the FAO approved institutions. Upon graduating, the **NSW-RECI Liaison Officer** would be given a **subspecialty code**—similar to the FAO functional codes and Navy subspecialty assigned presently—that designated the region in which he is qualified.

Following the advanced civil schooling, subspecialty code assignment, and subsequent language training the NSW officer could be utilized as a NSW-RECI LNO and be assigned to a JSOTF, NSW Task Group, or NSW Task Unit. NSW-RECI officers would best be utilized at the forward NSW locations such as the NSWUs (Bahrain, Guam, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Germany) or one of the Theater SOCs and be TACON to the JSOTF/NSWTG/NSWTU. The same premise—as with the RECI specialist—NSW-RECI LNOs could travel the region (focus on maritime/littoral portions), develop intelligence/support networks, and improve their cultural immersion skills.

The grading within the officer and senior enlisted fitness reporting process would need to reflect the value added by NSW-RECI LNOs and specialists. The goal here would be to make NSW-RECI jobs highly desirable and career enhancing for all who pursued them.

Operating in small numbers, SEALs' ability to conduct clandestine, high-risk missions and provide real time intelligence and eyes on target, offer decision makers immediate and virtually unlimited options in the face of rapidly changing wartime situations. SEALs maintain a forward presence,

regional orientation, language skills, and cultural awareness as they conduct operations throughout the world.

With half the world's industry and population located within one mile of an ocean or navigable river and 144 of 170 sovereign nations accessible from sea or river systems, Naval Special Warfare's unique maritime capabilities make it a proven force for the future.

(HQ USSOCOM, 2003-2004, pp. 20-21, emphasis added)

**Cultural immersion** is not the final ends to the final means. Rather, it is a tool or skill set that allows missions to develop and to be executed with smooth transitions. It does not guarantee mission success but certainly assures greater mission success than can be achieved operating without it. **Cultural immersion** allows those who possess these skills—or the forces they have working for them who possess these skills—to have a distinct edge over an adversary who doesn't have these assets. **Cultural immersion** also “evens up the playing field” when US or allied forces are operating in foreign lands against otherwise invisible or immersed enemies.

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